



LEADER

FALL 2010

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Anna's Letter

I've just returned from a wonderful holiday at the Diocesan cottage in Waterton. Such a beautiful and majestic part of our province and God's Creation.

My brother-in-law, Jason, and his partner, Frank, came down to the cottage with us for the first couple of days. One evening they decided to tackle one of the many jig-saw puzzles that have accumulated in the cottage over the years. They sat down at the table and began by looking for all the edge pieces. It soon became apparent that one edge piece was missing and that the puzzle was not, in fact, complete. At this point Frank decided that the puzzle was no longer worth doing and quit. Jason, James and I argued that it didn't really matter, we could still enjoy doing an 'incomplete' puzzle. This debate about the worthiness of futility of working on an incomplete puzzle led to much laughter and teasing. Frank is about a decade younger than the rest of us and we teased him that by our age we know that in life 'there is always a piece missing.' No job, marriage, vacation, family, project, philosophy or theology ever has 'all the pieces' but we do our best and move forward with what we've got. If you always insist that all the pieces be there you'd never do anything we argued.

Church life, as I presume most of you have noticed, rarely, if ever, has all the pieces in place. From a theological perspective, instead of a 'complete puzzle,' we might have strong faith or trust in some things, doubts and uncertainties about others, and a willingness to surrender to the majesty and mystery of God about so much.

At a more mundane level, getting all the pieces in place for a church picnic (my apologies to all the children who were disappointed by the lack of a bouncy castle at June's picnic!) or for a major renovation project (on-going) also always seems to be more difficult than you would think. But we move forward with faith with what we've got!

There are many exciting pieces that are in place for the fall. Over \$675, 000 has been pledged for our capital campaign. We're currently working both on grants and financing to help move us closer to our \$1 million target. We're also working with the design/build people at Omicron to make sure the project itself fits within the \$1 million budget. More information about all of this in the warden's report on page 4.

Almost all of the pieces are in place for the November Wisdom Centre event with Phyllis Tickle (poster on back page). The Saturday workshop is entitled "The Church is Dead: Long Live the Church" and is a look at the tectonic changes that are underway in the Church at this juncture in history. It is sure to be a stimulating day. In addition, on Sunday, November 21st there will be a joint St. Laurence/Christ Church 10:30 am service at Christ Church (3602 8th St. SW). Phyllis Tickle will be the preacher. As happened last November when we went to Christ Church to hear Rabbi Shapiro, there will be no service at St. Laurence that Sunday. Please mark your calendars and join us for worship at Christ Church.

As always I feel blessed to serve such a dynamic and lively parish. I look forward to continuing the shared work of piecing together the puzzle that is St. Laurence.

Yours faithfully,

WARDEN'S REPORT – PART 1

Wayne

Vestry Retreat

On a bright and sunny Saturday in June, members of the parish vestries of 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 joined for a half day retreat.

This provided an opportunity to review the work of the past year and to identify the way forward. In addition, it was a time when new members could learn from outgoing members, giving a base from which to move forward.

We discussed and identified priorities for the upcoming year. These include: renovations to the building, a series of services like the series on Seven Deadly Sins, reaching out to the community and looking at what we are now doing alone that we could be doing together (i.e. links to B'nai Tikvah, OneBody Youth Group).

We decided to organize our work into five committees and assigned leadership as follows:

- a. **Building/Fundraising** – Wayne
Melanie
- b. **Social Justice** – Stuart This committee will focus on our work with Natasha and Emily, homelessness and the Metropolitan Alliance for the Common Good (MacG).
- c. **Spiritual Development** – Anna
Greenwood-Lee, Spencer
Finance – Don
- d. **Communications** – Elizabeth

Each of the committees was asked to update their priorities for the next year and submit those to Vestry by the end of October.

Two other decisions were made to facilitate the work of the new vestry and to ensure we remain on track through the major work of facility change:

1. a financial report from the Finance committee will be required for each vestry meeting, and
2. we will prepare a summary of Vestry decisions and decisions regarding building renovations that will be available for distribution to various committees and groups in the church

It was also suggested that a small sidebar with upcoming events be added to the Spiritual Practice newsletter. This would include a list of baptisms, special sermons, etc.

We wish to thank members who are retiring, for their work over the past two years and welcome new members to the important work ahead.

Facility Plans and Status

Much of our work during the past few months has centered on the changes to our building. The work was organized into two main functions: raising the funds required and developing plans for the changes.

A fund raising committee was formed and undertook to connect with every family in our parish. Each parish family was offered a visit and most took us up on the offer. Visits were

completed around the end of May and pledges continued to come in through June.

We are very pleased to report that that response has been very good. As of June 27, we have received pledges, including the amount previously in the fund, totaling \$680,000. Of this amount, \$393,000 has been pledged and/or received for 2010; \$172,000 for 2011; \$109,000 for 2012 and the remainder for 2013.

We are also applying for provincial government grants for accessibility and believe we will qualify for an amount between \$125,000 and \$250,000. While a bit short of our target of \$1,000,000 (and we will gratefully accept additional donations), we are confident that the funding in hand and pledged allows us to proceed with the changes that equip our building for accessibility and that modernize our sanctuary space.

We wish to express our appreciation to committee members and to all whose pledges allow these important changes to proceed.

WARDEN'S REPORT – PART 2

Project Oversight Update

Melanie

Not much has changed on the building status through the summer. With vacations and such getting meetings pulled together has proven challenging.

Omicron has been working on the development permit submission for the City of Calgary. We anticipate that the city will take at least 90 days to review and approve this document. They presented us with part of the submission, but it needed further review. Prior to submitting this application to the City a couple of members of the project team and Anna will be meeting with

the architect to determine where we stand against our target budget. Additional landscaping to add parking was suggested, but we need to have a handle on the dollar implications. Mid-August is the planned time for this meeting to occur.

Steve has contacted 4 or 5 different audio visual companies to get a handle not only on the cost but the potential design implications of the decisions we make in this area. A few of these firms have visited the church and submitted back to us a very high level informational response.

At this point we will be consulting with the architect on how they would advise us to make our next steps in this area and what points in the process we should be making the decision.

Our Vestry for 2010

Wardens

Wayne

Linda

Melanie

Liz

Carolyn

Stuart

Stephen

Denise

Don

Elizabeth

Spencer

DEADLINE

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WINTER LEADER

IS
NOVEMBER 2ND.

YOUTH NEWS

Sunday School and Youth group will resume on **Sunday, September 12**. We are pleased to welcome back Betty to the nursery and Jennifer to the younger Sunday school class. Emily will take the older Sunday School class and, at press time, we are in the process of recruiting a new youth leader to work with Jill. Please speak with Anna if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions to do with our ministry to children and youth.

OneBody Youth Events

CONFIRMATION CLASSES begin on Sunday, September 12th

OneBody Confirmation begins this week. Meet at Knox Presbyterian (3704 37th St. SW) from 6-8 p.m. For more information or to register, contact Anna or Jill.

KICK OFF BBQ on Sunday, September 19th 12-3 pm @ picnic site #2 in Edworthy Park. Bring \$5 to cover lunch and snacks. This will be our 4th annual epical photo scavenger hunt. It gets quirkier and harder every year.

MANNA CALGARY ANGLICAN YOUTH GATHERING on Saturday, September 25th. This is our second annual Diocesan wide youth gathering. It takes place at Christ Church from 10-4 p.m. A great opportunity to have fun while meeting other Anglican youthlings. Cost is \$10 and includes lunch. For more information contact Jill.

ONEBODY YOUTH/FAMILY RETREAT on October 1-3rd. Join us in Canmore for an awesome weekend of hiking, games and bonding in the beautiful Rocky Mountains. We will be heading up to Canmore Friday night, sharing a meal together and then hiking Saturday. Saturday night, the youth will be with me, parents will have a free night and younger siblings will have their own event as well. Sunday morning we will share a service together then head home. A wonderful opportunity to get to know other youth, families and parents in our Diocese. Accommodations are at the Quality Resort Chateau Canmore (403.678.6699, <http://www.chateaucanmore.com/>). For \$99/night this hotel includes a pool, 2 double beds, a pull out couch, fridge, microwave, toaster and fireplace. This deal is only good until September 2, 2010, so book quickly. If you have your own accommodation, please let me know! There will be a reasonable fee on top of this per family, to cover meal costs over the weekend. I hope you will take part in this exciting event.

There are tons of exciting events happening for youth to kick off the fall. Please contact Jill (jillian_anna@hotmail.com) if you have any questions or would like to RSVP.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Lillian, Chair

Practicing Month to Month Newsletter

The “Spiritual Practice of the Month” newsletters, inspired by a recent book by Barbara Brown Taylor, *An Altar in the World*, are continuing. The June issue highlighted the practice of Carrying Water: Physical Labour and was prepared by Wayne Stewart. A focus on Spiritual Practices will continue in a variety of ways over the next year. The fall newsletters will be based on Nora Gallagher’s book *The Sacred Meal*. Thanks to those who have volunteered to write the newsletters. If you are interested in contributing in this way please speak with Anna or Lillian.

Adult Education

Several parishioners from St. Laurence joined with the people of the Good Shepherd to walk the outside Labyrinth at their church in Wildwood on the evening of June 21st. The weather cooperated and it was a wonderful way to celebrate the summer solstice. Plans are in place to gather again next June for this ancient practice.

Stuart, a Calgary poet and St. Laurence parishioner, is offering a four-part workshop on Poetry as a Spiritual Practice, a way of deepening our inner communion with God. The course will be held at St. Laurence on

Wednesday evenings, October 20th, 27th,
November 3rd and 10th.

Yoga and Christian Meditation

The Saturday morning yoga sessions were well received last year. A Yoga and Christian Meditation session led by Gayle Andrews will be held on a Saturday morning in the fall. The date will be announced in early September. This is gentle yoga and all are welcome to attend.

Christian Meditation/ Contemplative Prayer

Contemplative prayer services will resume in the fall on the fourth Monday of every month at 7:30 pm and the first and third Thursdays of the month at 9:30 am. All are welcome and encouraged to come to any of these sessions when we can.

Library

Several new books have been added to the St. Laurence library collection. Please feel free to browse after church and sign something out. Contact Spencer or Barb if you have questions about the library.

Wisdom Centre

We continue to work in collaboration with the Wisdom Centre. Phyllis Tickle will be the guest speaker at a conference at Christ Church on November 19th and 20th. The Friday workshop is titled *Leadership for the Emerging Church* and is intended for clergy and church leaders. The Saturday session is titled *The Church is Dead. Long Live the Church* and is open to the public. Please check the Wisdom Centre website for more information and to register.

NEW POETRY COURSE AT ST LAURENCE

Stuart

One of the uses of poetry is that it writes us too. Good poetry can, perhaps even should, imprint

in both poet and reader a kind of delighted wonderment. The great and exciting challenge for me as a poet and teacher of poetry is nurturing this state. How can I bring to every word, every line and every student a potent awareness that poetry is itself an expression of faith? How can an hour in the classroom translate into a lifetime of loving what poetry does to us?

Asking these questions in the church seems appropriate. A church is not only a place of joy and solace; it is a place of inspiration. Many of my poems deal with those holy, silent, still moments in church. In these moments it is possible to encounter God, to know the imprint of His words on our souls. Writing poetry, then, is not outside the realm of what we do as a community of believers. Writing poetry is another spiritual practice.

The four week course I will teach at St. Laurence this fall will focus on various ways of discovering poetry as a spiritual practice. For example, we will make use of the discipline of contemplation. What can we gain from looking deeply into selected works of art, nature or poems? How does this process affect us as poets and as people of faith? Each class will include guided writing exercises, private writing time and group discussions. Editing our work is an essential step in the development of a poetic voice and will be emphasized. Do not fear this, however, because this course is student centered. My job is never to dictate what students write, but to reveal new ways of how to write. In doing so students discover their own poetic voice. This course is open to all skill levels, 18 years to 100.

Students should expect more from this course than a new collection of poems. If we, the Body of Christ, are infused with the love of creating, imagine what God could do with us. A creative God could write in us a new word, one whose reach exceeds our understanding. Let us praise Him, certain that any creative act, no matter its size, is helpful.

Week One: Poetry as centering prayer
Week two: Poetry as discovery

Weeks Three and Four: Poetry as the work of joy

**Times: 7 pm on Wednesdays
October 20 and 27 and
November 3 and November 10**

MORE ON THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF WALKING

Norma

When I was writing the Spiritual Practices Newsletter, I searched everywhere for my favourite poem on walking. Unfortunately I was unable to find it. A few days ago I discovered it in my box of Treasures. It was sent to me by a dear friend after the death of her daughter. Here it is:

I WALK

I walk
To cleanse my soul

I walk
To charge dreams with reality

I walk
To clear anger with reason.

I walk
To live with things I cannot change,

I walk
For fresh air, limber muscles,
To watch the change of seasons.

I walk
To observe water, trees, the flowers.

I walk
Because we are gifted:
Tomorrow may never come.

I walk to seek the truth:
Sometimes it's within my grasp.

I walk
To cleanse my soul

Anonymous

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

*"Be still and know that I am God."
(Psalm 46:10)*

Geri

A Contemplative prayer service includes prayers, chanting, readings, and a 20-minute period of silence. We gather together and welcome people from all spiritual paths and draw from any ecumenical sources to which the Divine leads us. Whether you are new to spiritual journeying or are already well along on your chosen path, you are welcome to join us as we sit as companions and join our hearts with God.

Contemplation is grounded in meditation, prayer and study to help us develop a heart-centered consciousness to accompany us as we are drawn to our work in the world. There are many ways to enter the Silence. Many practices invite us to focus on a word or our breath. Centering prayer invites us to focus our attention and let go of thoughts. There is no wrong way to be silent. If rest is all that is achieved, know that this is enough. If you find the time too long, you are welcome to move around while being mindful of the stillness of others. Opening your heart to the silence is your invitation for God to move in. Our goal is the acceptance and acknowledgement of the companion presence that is waiting for us to open the door.

Please join us for a Contemplative Prayer Service at St Laurence at 9:30 am on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month recommencing September 2. Commencing in September, a Contemplative Prayer Service will be held at Living Spirit United Church at 9:30 am on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays.

"The central silence is the purest element of the soul, the soul's most exalted place, the core, the essence of the soul." (Meister Eckhart)

WHAT IS STEPHEN MINISTRY ANYWAY?

Carol

**"Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."
Galatians 6:2**

Blessed as we are with so much abundance, we all experience times when life gets challenging. We have disappointments, face setbacks or feel discouraged. These down times don't last forever and sometimes we find ourselves feeling better in a few days.

However, sometimes the challenges we face are longer lasting and can seem insurmountable. Perhaps we are grieving the loss of a family member, facing the breakdown of a relationship, dealing with a serious illness or unemployment. When we find ourselves in such a situation a Stephen Minister, a fellow parishioner can help by providing one on one caring support, encouragement and prayer. In preparation for this ministry, Stephen Ministers receive extensive training in caring and listening and supporting. A Stephen Minister walks with us but is not a replacement for professional help that might also help us.

In St Laurence we have two trained Stephen Ministers, Carol and Suzanne, who have each

been assigned by Anna to provide care for a fellow parishioner. The matches and all aspects of the caring relationship are confidential and the care may be additional to the support the person receives from Anna and the Pastoral Care Team. Following is the testimony of a parishioner who benefited from this ministry.

“Stephen Ministry came to me at a time in my life where I was dealing with overwhelming grief. I was fighting with God, questioning God, and yet needing the comfort of the presence of God. My Stephen Minister brought me that presence of God. The one on one conversations and prayer brought some light into the darkness. I had previously struggled with the power of prayer. Through the Stephen Ministry, I felt held up by prayer.”

This ministry is a great support to the clergy team but is also very satisfying to the individuals involved, the Minister and the Care-Receiver. St. Laurence would benefit greatly by having more Stephen Ministers. There will be a training session beginning in January for people interested in the program. If you would like more information about Stephen Ministry, please speak to Anna, Suzanne or contact Carol Bell at 403 253-4221. There are brochures in the library for your perusal. We look forward to hearing from you.

CRAFT GROUP

Mary

During the spring session we worked on baby quilts and afghans which were delivered to *Best Beginnings* and *Sheriff King Home*, two agencies which we support.

Barb Maddocks spent many hours making bereavement folders for the Children’s Hospital, also an ongoing project. And Anita Kohse, a very speedy sewer, made many baby flannel jackets to be sent to a charity in Africa.

We celebrated the season with “lunch out” at Chianti’s in Willow Park – well attended and very pleasant.

We’ll start our fall session on **September 15th**. As always, new members are welcome and new ideas always appreciated.

LOST AND FOUND

Please check the narthex “Lost & Found” basket for gloves, scarves, and other items which may belong to you. A black zippered jacket (with lambs’ wool lining) was left after the garage sale and is hanging in the narthex. When the cool weather comes, someone will be looking for this nice new looking jacket.

PWRDF Western Region Conference

to be held at St. Laurence in October. **They are looking for people willing to billet.**

Approximately 20 people from out of town are expected. It would be for two evenings **Friday, October 29th and Saturday, October 30th.**

If you can help out, please contact Alison Longson at 403-243-5478

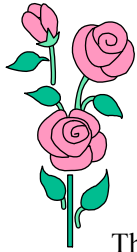
AVAILABLE

To accommodate those who are hard of hearing Anna provides written copies of her sermon to a couple of individuals prior to the service. If anyone else would benefit from having a written copy please let Anna or the office know.

WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Cathi

Ladies' Spring Breakfast



The 2010 Ladies' Spring Breakfast was held on Sunday May 16th. It was well attended, 48 tickets were sold. The few men who attempted purchase tickets, pouted when told it is a ladies-only event.

The food was super and there was plenty. There was an assortment of hot dishes, including quiches, ham & cheese strata and Mediterranean Pie as well as fresh fruit trays and a variety of muffins. The leftovers were served after the service so the men were able to sample the homemade items. No more pouting.

The lower hall looked awesome thanks to Tara's and Lynn's choices i.e. the colour scheme. The greens and purples went together so well. Many compliments were given on how the room was transformed e.g. very Spring-like, great bright colours.

Thank you to the Committee. Good show!

Committee Announcement

It was announced at the breakfast that the existing Women's Committee was stepping down. The Committee consisting of Beckie, Cecily, Cathi, Melanie, Tara and Lynn, has been together for over 5 years. It was time for a change. There was a plea for volunteers to carry on the tradition.

In true St. Laurence fashion, ladies came forward. Barbara said that she would like to volunteer. A few more ladies offered to help with events: Sylvia, Peggy, Gayle, and Suzanne. Martha and Norma volunteered to do the Christmas Dessert party as well as next year's Spring Breakfast.

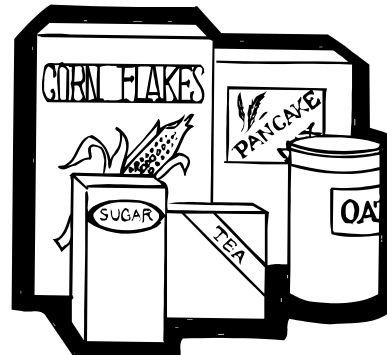
Thank you for stepping forward Ladies.

Resources

The former Committee is available as a resource for ideas, sharing past experience and communicating lessons learned.

There is a committee binder with meeting notes and event records. Melanie created a CD containing files and templates used by the Committee i.e. posters, tickets, sign-ups sheets for the breakfasts, dessert parties, the wine tasting, retreats and a luncheon. She also included past articles for The Leader authored by Beckie.

A big thank you to the ladies of the Women's Committee. Your time, effort, talents and enthusiasm produced many great fun events. Good Show!



FOOD BANK SUNDAY IS THE LAST SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH.

Place your contribution in the wicker basket located in the narthex. For a tax deductible receipt place cheque or cash in an envelope marked "Food Bank" in the collection plate.

As of July 2nd St. Laurence had donated 286 lbs. of mixed food to the Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank.

Music - Autumn 2010

The first practice this fall will be Thursday, September 9. As always, anyone is welcome to join in our music ministry at St. Laurence. Contact any member of the choir if you are interested or just come to practise at 7:30 p.m. If you can play an instrument and would like to contribute to our worship, please let me know.

Our summer “hymn requests” were more popular than ever. Thanks to everyone who asked for a favourite hymn. We even sang a few of them more than once as various people asked for them again throughout the summer!

This fall we will be taking part in a major musical project, described in the following article from the website of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada:

Out of Amazing Grace, a Silent Night

*Christmas came early as members of the 2010 General Synod raised their voices June 8 to sing the carol “Silent Night.” Their heartfelt performance launched the **Silent Night Project: Anglicans promote peace in the spirit of Amazing Grace.***

Just like the 2008 [Amazing Grace Project](#), all are invited to record themselves singing “Silent Night” and send it to the Anglican Church of Canada national office by December 14. All videos will be included in a documentary, which will be posted online by Christmas 2010.

*The model for this initiative—the Amazing Grace Project—was a resounding success. Thousands of Canadian Anglicans sang and recorded themselves in downtown cathedrals, seniors’ homes, and remote outposts. Over 500 videos were sent in and all were included in a documentary, *Amazing Together*. The 10-minute video has been viewed over 4,000 times on YouTube and received a special jury award at WorldFest Houston.*

Not only did people sing and share, they also gave. Although the Amazing Grace Project was originally designed as a unity-building project, the project raised over \$100,000, now being used for suicide prevention in the Council of the North.

For the Silent Night Project, singers are again invited to chip in a toonie or loonie, and this time all donations will be given to the Anglican Military Ordinariate (AMO). Through the AMO, Canadian Anglicans support chaplains and their families who minister to the Canadian Forces.

I am hoping that we can sing our “Silent Night” in harmony; more information will be appearing in September bulletins regarding after-service practices to learn the alto, tenor and bass lines.

Deb Koning

Fair Trade Coffee and Tea



bestow!

Summer is winding down. I trust that all of your senses were filled to overflowing with the glories of the season. What blessings our summers

Fair trade sales will occur the first Sunday of the two remaining even months of this calendar year. Products are available immediately following the service. The dates are as follows:

October 3, 2010

December 5, 2010

I trust that those of you who purchased olive oil in June are enjoying it. I will have oil available in October.

Your purchases support farmers and their families in developing countries and PWRDF. (For those who may not know, Ten Thousand Villages donates 10% of the total sales to St. Laurence which in turn goes to PWRDF. If you feel inclined to return your empty coffee bags to me, an additional 10 cents is included in the donation. Please return the bags to me or place them in the recycling bin in the kitchen.)

Blessings,

Carol
PWRDF representative

Below is a review of Richard Rohr's *Wild Man to Wise Man* which is a recent addition to our library.

Ian



Although Richard Rohr entered the Franciscan order at the age of 18, he manages to put down on paper a credible description of the psychological and sexual changes that occur in a man's life through the decades.

The book is very accessible and deserves consideration by anyone who is interested in the development of the male psyche. Rohr's presentation is concise and pointed, and still covers the material thoroughly. His points sometimes have double entendres, as in the hard and soft of the male persona, but his language does not allow for any insult or offense.

Rohr's description of male mothering is very interesting. He then goes on to extend his discussion to male "brothering" when no adequate "male mother" exists. His treatise is very credible but it should be remembered that it is only one man's opinion.

Women should be equally encouraged to read this book. They will find much to excite them in the direction Rohr feels men should be taking, if given adequate "father and mother" figures in their lives.

(While not as powerful as Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, *Wild Man to Wise Man* may prove to be equally significant.)

VIEWS FROM THE PEWS

Theological Triflings of a Layman **The Parable of the Toronto Shepherd**

Dave

That Jesus was a master storyteller is evidenced by the enduring value of His parables. Somehow, to this day, we instinctively connect with the people and situations He described. The parables tend to work on three levels, offering narrowly constrained advice about the issue at hand, a broader object lesson and an insight into the nature of God and our relationship to Him.

The nature of the parable came to mind in late July when I read the news of a priest in Toronto who offered the bread of Holy Communion to a German Shepherd in a well intentioned but misguided gesture of welcoming the dog's master. Ridicule and rebuke came quickly and in short order the priest offered an apology. After thinking about it, I couldn't help wondering if this strange Anglican tale was a modern equivalent to Jesus' parables; call it *The Parable of the Toronto Shepherd*.

Interpreted narrowly The Parable of the Toronto Shepherd suggests that good intentions are not sufficient justification for our actions. It's another reminder that the proverbial road to hell is paved with good intentions.

The Parable of the Toronto Shepherd could also be taken as a caution against the urges of self-actualization ("it's all about me and what I think"), self-justification ("it's OK if it feels right") and self-authority ("I can pick and choose what's right"), especially as they combine with the modern day hubris of re-inventing Christianity. Good Christian theology doesn't happen on the fly but rather builds on our two thousand year old foundation of Scripture, tradition and reason. It is a foundation that undeniably requires our constant attention if our intent is to stay in harmony with God's. But to un-tether ourselves is to surrender

to ego as we award ourselves the ability to play God and impose the prejudice of our finite minds.

The Toronto Shepherd also serves to remind us that only God is God and that we must approach the things of God with the greatest deference lest we substitute our wisdom and judgment for His. The absurdity of substituting our judgment for His can become rapidly and painfully obvious.

Perhaps the greatest revelations come when we scrutinize our lives in the light of a parable's lessons. For me, The Parable of the Toronto Shepherd suggests some pointed questions for the broader church and our parish too.

Do we occasionally take theological positions based on what feels right? Do we build those positions with broad consensus upon the foundation of our Christian heritage? Do we look for answers inside ourselves, guided by our egos and prejudice, or do we look outside ourselves and to God?

Do we give the things of God the deference they deserve? Do we occasionally tinker with the Sacraments? Do we hold out Jesus' life, death and Resurrection as His Truth or a story to tell as we wish?

We can choose to allow the parables to go in one ear and out the other or we can choose to wrestle with them and take away new insights. A parable's true value though emerges in the action it impels. As we begin a new church year in September are there insights for us in The Parable of the Toronto Shepherd and more importantly, are there things for us to do?

Makes you think, Eh ?

Wayne

Reading again this weekend the delightful little book, “Servanthood,” by Bishop Sims (Cowley Publications, 1997), has me thinking of paradox and perfection.

I then went back to “The Age of Paradox” by Charles Handy (Harvard Business School Press, 1994) for elucidation. Handy states that “I used to think that paradoxes were the visible signs of an imperfect world.” Perfection would come at some future time, with work, he thought.

A few paragraphs later, Handy admits “I no longer believe in the possibility of perfection. Paradox I now see to be inevitable and perpetual.”

He goes on to point out that “God’s great gift to mankind- choice- turns out to be a paradox” at the heart of religion. “The freedom to choose implies the freedom to choose wrong,” making perfection unlikely in a human world. Indeed “paradox is what makes life interesting.”

Sims’ book is about servant leadership, a paradoxical term of particular interest to Christians as our Lord Jesus is the prototypical servant leader. Recall Jesus’ words from Matthew, “the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (20:26).

Sims alerts us to the question of God as perfectionist, seeking perfection from his creation. The fact that Jesus “invited into his ranks the brazenly imperfect people.. to join him in servanthood” means for Sims that “God is not a perfectionist. God cannot be a perfectionist and continue to allow the world to exist, especially that part of the world that follows Jesus and yet looks so little like him- the church.”

On the other hand, Sims is not giving up on the church for it is “ever renewed by the grace of God and the flawed fidelity of good people.”

The author of Hebrews suggests that we are unlikely to ever achieve perfection, certainly not by following the law. Made me think of Vic’s sermon on July 25 when he encouraged us to repeat the Lord’s Prayer morning and night, on the route to a semblance of perfection.

Once we become comfortable with the paradox of servant leadership, recognized in the model of Jesus, and become adept at its practice, the entire notion of paradox becomes something we are better able to accommodate in our daily lives. Good thing too, for we are constantly confronted with paradox.

Perfection is likely beyond our grasp and a constant striving for it may simply frustrate our ability to serve in an effective, albeit imperfect way. And serve we must.

I am comforted by Sims’ words and their impact on my reading of Scripture. And the paradoxes that I face daily do indeed make life very interesting.

Made me think. How about you?

IMPORTANT NOTICE

On Sunday, November 21st there will not be a service at St. Laurence as we are joining Christ Church (3602 8th St. SW) at 10:30 am where Phyllis Tickle will be the preacher.