

**Vestry Address**  
**February 26<sup>nd</sup>, 2017**  
**Rev. Jane McCaig**

The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction."

**2 Peter 1:20-21**

Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!"

**Matthew 17:2-4**

The Gospel reading for today points us to the story of the transfiguration of Jesus on a high mountain. It has been speculated by some that this took place on Mount Tabor, and by others that it was on Mount Hermon. Whichever mountain it was on is really not that important. What is important is the story.

On a mountain Peter, James and John were awestruck by what they saw. On that mountain Jesus's face shone like the sun and his clothes became dazzling white. And that was not all the disciples saw; they saw Moses and Elijah. Dear Peter is so enthralled with the scene that he suggests putting up three dwellings so that they can stay right where they are. He was ready to stay in that moment. He was ready to hold on to that moment forever.

The Transfiguration of Jesus is a pivotal moment in the Christian tradition. The setting on the mountain is presented as the point where humanity meets God: the meeting place of the temporal and the eternal, with Jesus himself as the connecting point, acting as the bridge between heaven and earth. A Voice from heaven proclaimed, "This is my son the beloved with him I am well pleased, listen to him."

After a bit of fear and trembling Jesus does a bit of pastoral care and takes the disciples back down the mountain. As much as Peter wanted to stay in that sacred moment and keep things just the way they were, Jesus didn't allow for it. Jesus took the disciples back down the mountain and told them not to tell anyone about what they had seen.

I often think that in the life of the church we have many people who are stuck in their comfortable pew. Some folks want the church to be as it has always been, sing the old hymns and use the old liturgical language. That is what church is to them. That is where church is comfortable. For these people, the traditions of the church are held in esteem.

Then there are other folks, some of whom wish to cast church tradition aside looking for new church experiences. They desire new music, new liturgies, chairs and not pews, new formatting of the worship space. All this in the hope of revitalizing their faith experience and therefore, revitalizing their faith.

There are folks that believe we should be doing more in Outreach and others who feel that we should take care at home first. There are people who keep watch at the financial bottom line, while others think this is a sign that there is not enough trust in the Holy Spirit's guidance.

All I can say is welcome to the Anglican Church. As it was, it shall always be. We need both voices; in fact, we need all voices to inform where we go from here.

Today we come together to talk about “stuff.” Church stuff. We come together to celebrate the good work that has been done in the past year and to look forward to the year ahead as we, guided by the Holy Spirit, plan for the ongoing ministries of the church at St Thomas.

Last year, the celebration of 150 years of the presence of St Thomas church, an Anglican presence in the area, was acknowledged and celebrated with many activities. Our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary vision statement of “Today’s Church for Tomorrow’s World” was a vibrant and fresh statement that we lived into with excitement. I am not sure why we let this current, short, pithy and easy to remember statement end with the 150<sup>th</sup> celebration. I would like to see it replace the one that says, “St Thomas sets its heart toward being a Christian home which welcomes, encourages and affirms all People.”

I would like to thank the members of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Planning Committee with Chair William Passmore for all their work and also for all who participated in the events. It was good to welcome back previous Rectors: the Venerable Sally Gadd, and the Venerable Paul Blunt. We welcomed the Men and Boys’ Choir of Christ Church Cathedral. A Banner was quilted, and Church Paintings hung. A book on our history was made, and coffee cups and T-shirts commemorated the event. International Outreach in building a school in Nicaragua was accomplished by both our Youth and Adults. A pilgrimage to Kingston was orchestrated. A Children’s day was held themed on the Church 150 years ago. At the annual Cemetery Service a wonderful luncheon was held. The Altar Guild hosted the Annual Diocesan meeting with Bishop John in attendance. And a celebratory home-coming dinner was held at Irish Springs Golf Course with our Primate Fred Hiltz. Of the budgeted Gift funds that were set out for the years activities, only \$269 was utilized.

You may have been involved in conversations about your desire to have an Outreach budget. Yes, in the past there was an amount specifically set aside for outreach. The fact that there is no specific budget does not mean that Outreach is not being accomplished. In fact, clothing, toiletries, dishes and food stuffs are frequently delivered downtown. Donations are made to the Angel Tree by parishioners and \$500.00 was given from the Rector’s Discretionary Fund that had been given to St. Thomas from the residents of Stittsville Villa. \$409 given by parishioner donations and donated to the Stittsville Food Bank. A special donation in the amount of \$500 was given to PWRDF in thanks for Archbishop Fred’s time with us.

On top of those offerings, there is \$14,625 in Fair Share that is given to the Diocese for Local, National and International Outreach. \$4,367 was also offered by parishioners for PWRDF. \$100 was donated for the Fort McMurray relief, and a donation was also made to St. Jude’s Cathedral. \$1,450 was donated to the Kanata-Stittsville Refugee Support Group, of which \$1,000 of this was donated from proceeds from the Open Table dinners; this is the second year this has been done. The Children’s Festival was an Outreach program that was offered freely and the goods from the garden were taken to the Food Bank. Almost \$1,000 was offered in goods and funds for the people of Iqaluit. And for Canon Michael’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary a ton of food and money was offered. Then there are the uncalculated amounts that are given to the Angel Tree ministry at Christmas. On top of this, the ACW had a wonderful Outreach program also offering approximately \$800 to various concerns.

Outreach is being done and done well. Would it not be wonderful to have a budget line, so that you can see it? The short answer is: Yes. What I want you to realize is that presently our Youth Group have not been allocated funds in the budget. The Choir has a paltry \$50.00 allocated for music for the whole year. While I do understand the desire for an Outreach line item, we are still doing well. That being said, our Church community has needs at home as well as in the community. This is not being short sighted. It is being reasonable. A line item can be considered for the 2018 budget but this will need your help. It can be accomplished by each one of us increasing our offerings to the church.

That takes us to the yearend financial statement. Yes, we ended up with a surplus. Halleluiah! A \$12 surplus. This happened because a last minute invitation was given to Parish Council members to make up the \$800.00 deficit that was projected should they desire to do so. And many did. So, thank you to all the People of St. Thomas.

Talking about finances: On March 5<sup>th</sup> the Annual Stewardship program will begin. In view of the desire to have a budget line for Outreach, or to accommodate any costs that might be incurred through the Visioning exercise, I say to you, we need to put our money where our mouths are. Prayerfully consider and challenge yourselves to give, to increase your donations as the Holy Spirit leads you, to allow the ministries of the church to prosper as God would desire.

In May our Parish took on a visioning exercise. Many diverse idea's came forth and there was excitement in the air. The ideas were categorized into five themes:

**Evolve Liturgy** Ideas included:

- Less formal service
- Have only music
- Have more music
- Limit hymns to 4 verses, five at most
- Update service, more upbeat

Please be aware there are some things that can be done and some things that are out of my control. Anglicans have an authorized liturgy. Within it there are things that can be modified and I hope that together we can accomplish your desires.

I was surprised with the diversity in hopes for music because the next theme was **Music**.

- Have more lively music
- Have more music and more up to date music
- Music? I'm not sure what that meant.

**Attract Others** was the next theme:

- Be more welcoming: How would one suggest that we do to be more welcoming?
- Reach out to young (single) adults, reach out to young families.

**Develop Inter-church relationships** was the 4<sup>th</sup> theme:

- Attend other churches fundraising event
- Collaborate with other churches for a once a year fundraiser
- Pair up with a Northern Parish

And finally: **Engage Community (Stittsville)**:

- Be out in the community
- Organize good works in the community like "Lions"
- Those who need Christ need our actions, not more Bible studies

Most recently, a week ago yesterday, a Choir Director was hired for our Church Community. Her name is Patricia Brush. She brings with her many years of coaching singing and leading choirs. You will meet Pat (another Pat!) next week.

There is more work to be done to flesh out actions to the concerns that came from our Visioning Day. I hope that each of us will help in the next phase. There will be a need for committees to be set up that will advise Parish Council on the next steps related to each theme.

Now it is time for letters of thanks:

- To William Passmore and the 150<sup>th</sup> Planning Committee.
- To Merilee Clarke and the folks who assist in God's Garden and the Children's talks.
- To Judy Dallaway and all who assist in the Open Table and Friends of the Family ministry.
- To Hilary Shouldice and those who helped tend the flower beds.
- To Marlyn Powell for 6 years of leadership for the Altar Guild and for Arlene Simonivitch who has taken on the leadership.
- To Bob McCaig and the Budget Team, and all those who have worked with the upkeep of the building.
- To Bob Lomas and the team who applied a refreshing new coat of paint in the Church Hall.
- To Don Gillen, the Choir, Cornerstone for their music.
- To all of you who assist on Sunday mornings in any fashion.
- To Parish Council: What a good natured group you have been. There has been more laughter than conflicting ideas. There has been wonderful concern for this Church that has been shown in our deliberations. Thank you to Ryan Dallaway for his service as he steps down from Parish Council.
- And to our Wardens: Liz Hall; you took on this role and you served our Church community well. Your counselling spirit, your calm demeanor and the wisdom you have and your willingness to share them have been appreciated. I am so thankful that you said yes.
- To Pat McNally, my sincerest thanks for your presence as my Warden these past three years, and I look forward to the fourth. Your humour, frank speech, your love of God and your willingness to serve this community have been a blessing and will continue to do so.
- To anyone I have not thanked please forgive me. I'm trying my best.

And lastly:

I would like to remember those parishioners who have passed from this life to the nearer presence of God:

- Marion Everett Wood
- John Iner Clarke
- David William Holland
- John Herbert Wall

Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord, and let Light perpetual shine upon them.

I began this address with the passage on the Transfiguration of our Lord. May we see the radiance of our Lord in our lives, may we resist the temptation to stay on the mountain, and may we walk into those places that are leading us.