

## Rector's Report

The Rector's report to Vestry is intended in the Canons, Bylaws and Regulations of the Diocese to be a "report upon [the] condition, progress and needs of the Parish" (R.5.05).

I have used the same format each year since my arrival at St Mark's five years ago. With one small adjustment in the order of presentation, I will do so again this year.

### Progress

The ministry team at St Mark's changed significantly in 2012. At this time last year, we were searching for a Parish Nurse. The Wardens' report details the hiring of Janet Helmer to fill this position. Also, as Ariane Dind began a one-year leave of absence in August of 2012, Barbara Hallam-Price joined the parish as interim Organist and Choir Director. Last summer, as a cost-controlling measure, we returned to a pattern where the church office is closed for the months of July and August. Margaret Pirnat graciously agreed to this, and it seems to have worked well with minimal impact on the life of the parish.

September seemed like a fresh beginning, with two new people and the reopening of the Church office. The four of us began to meet on a regular basis every Tuesday morning as we formed ourselves into a team. I am pleased to report that this made for a very smooth transition for the staff and the parish. It is my honour and pleasure to work closely with this group of dedicated and gifted women. Barbara will be leaving her post a little sooner than planned. We wish her all the best as she takes on a new permanent position at St Bartholomew's after Easter. I look forward with great anticipation to Ariane's return later this year, to working together with her, Janet and Margaret serving the needs of St Mark's parishioners, and through you, the world God loves.

The Growing in Faith Together campaign afforded St Mark's an opportunity to take some dreams and put real resources behind them. Without GIFT, we would be hard pressed to find the resources for a Parish Nurse this year. There's much more to come, and I commend Michael Perkin's Stewardship report to you. I am pleased with the progress we made towards the ambitious goal put to us, and every few months, I see the total contributions from St Mark's keeps increasing. Clearly many of you believe in the work of the Church in our parish and our Diocese, and want to give of yourselves to be a part of that work.

There are many group ministries and people who contribute the balance: the things that paid staff and financial resources can't accomplish. Bringing all these together makes ministry happen at St Mark's. You will read in the pages of the Vestry Reports about this year's activities. I hope that you are able to read between the lines, and thereby see the story of faithful people serving God and the Church. Using the gifts God has given them, so many people deserve the appreciation of us all. Especially true are those who will be moving on from positions of service on Parish Council and other important roles, to serve those God loves in other ways. I hesitate to name names, but Cynthia Greer deserves a special mention here, stepping down from Council, Membership, Nursery and Coffee Coordinator. Janis Perkin completes four years of service at the Corporation as my Rector's Warden and the associated Deputy role. I thank God daily for the service these women and everyone else offers so faithfully and selflessly, and I would like to offer my personal thanks to them for their support.

Significant progress took place this year in the discussions with other churches in the Deanery of Ottawa West, which I reported on last year. At Archdeacon Chris Dunn's invitation, a focused conversation between St Mark's, St Richard's and St Michael and All Angels began in the fall of 2012. I encourage you to carefully consider the report on the Ministry Assessment Process included in this year's reports to Vestry, and the motion that will be presented at the annual meeting. This represents a watershed moment for these three congregations. Where the condition of the churches seems to call into question our ability to carry on, it's not our survival or our future that we need to worry about.

***“But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:33)***

I believe the mission of the Church is at stake, not the budget. The latter serves the former, and it is of utmost importance that we get the cart and the horse in the right order of procession.

The success of last year's Lenten Learning Lab in cooperation with St Richard's and St Michael's led to a shared study again this year. We are exploring other opportunities for the congregations to get to know one another. However we might find ourselves sharing ministry in the future, we will need a solid friendship with our brothers and sisters from other churches to build that work on. Exploring those friendships needs to start now.

### **Condition**

My report on the condition of the parish feels like the same report I have made every year as your Rector. The numbers tell one story; the passion and commitment of the people tell another. Both stories are true, and both will increasingly be determining factors as our future unfolds.

I can't see the future, so I don't know how much longer we will be able to sustain ministry the way we have enjoyed it up to the present. A full time priest, qualified musical direction, a parish nurse nurturing our health and wholeness, and a presence in the Church office to receive parishioners and visitors alike: the resources that sustain this complement of ministry are shrinking. This year, we are able to sustain these ministries we have come to rely on. Will next year be the year we face even harder choices? Will it be the year after that? I can't say for sure, but the trends clearly indicate that these hard choices are coming.

Death is a part of that reality. Many of those we lost in 2012 were champions of the ministry we share, and while we celebrate the completion of their life's journey in our Lord's grace and fellowship, we are sorely diminished by their loss. This year it seems very personal. While Don Porter's passing was a blessed relief from suffering, Gail Stone and Bob Wootton were unexpected, sudden one-two punches from our blind side that left us reeling. Judy Corbishley will always stand out to me as a person who invited me to make this parish my home: her loss hurt terribly. Herb Ellacott served well in his time, and leaves large shoes to fill. Camilla Frederick and Barbara May round out my list of active, well-known and contributing members at St Mark's who I buried this year.

If I feel their loss, after being here only five years, I can only imagine what it feels like to those of you who measure your time here in decades. While new faces have come to join us over the same 12 month period, the reality is that the support we enjoyed from these seven people alone takes years to develop, and we may not have years to develop the support we need to continue the same way.

That story has an ending, at what point I don't know. It doesn't look hopeful.

But you also need to hear a story that is just as true, just as real, and just as much a part of our future together. The passion and dedication of the people here has always been equal to the task. In their generation, the people of the parish built this place. They filled it with music and social activity, and made a home here. Their legacy is still with us, and we have been faithful stewards of what we have received from their labour. I see the story of God's people unfolding here, people who are fully human and fully blessed. I see God's hand in what has brought us to this moment, and I cannot believe that God has brought us here only to abandon us. We may have some hard work to do, developing creative solutions to problems previous generations could not even imagine, and we may have some tough choices to make. But we are gifted with all that God thinks we need to be a faithful community in our generation, to face the tasks that we alone can face, to pass the flame of faith on to those who will follow us.

You need to know that you are blessed with the gifts, resources and ability to respond to the challenges we face. You have what it takes, and God will show us the way.

### **Needs**

We need people. We need faithful people who are striving for the kingdom of God. To put that in concrete terms, I cite the Marks of Mission that have lately become a part of Anglican ethos. Particularly the first two Marks: to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom; to teach, baptise and nurture new believers. If we are serious about these, we need each other. The old battlegrounds that exist between one parish and another need to be restored and become fields fit for planting seeds again.

We need a solid and sustainable financial footing. We need a plan that matches ministry with the available resources. We have that now – barely, and not for much longer - but we will need some new thinking to address a new reality that will be here before we know it.

We need the mission of the Church to come first. As I've heard it put recently, "God's mission has a Church." Notice the reversal of "mission" and "Church" in that statement. We slip so easily into thinking that writing the mission of the Church is up to us. God already knows what God plans to do in this world. It's up to us to become a Church around that mission: to find it, to follow it, to resource it. It's up to us to examine our values and hopes, make a realistic assessment of our strengths and challenges, and dream a future where we live out God's call in community.

May God bless us again this year, as we have been so richly blessed before, and may the fruit of our blessing become blessings for those whom God will send us to seek and serve.

In Christ,

The Reverend Brian Kauk, Incumbent