

(LIGHT continued)

cided to speak in a new way. God decided to speak body language. This is John's story of Christmas in a nutshell. Like Luke, John is telling us about an encounter with the Holy One. God's Word was translated into a human being. God's self, soul, and life force were concentrated into one mortal life on earth, and as a result, nothing would ever be the same again. Not because everyone listened, because everyone does not – but because the eternal Word of God took human form “and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

From a sermon by Bob Cowell, Lay Reader,

January 2016

A Letter from a “Traditionalist”

Dear Traditional Worshipers,

I know you're there. I know there are many, many of you out there, no matter what others say. Believe me, I know how you feel.

I t's devastating to see what's happened to worship in the church. All ages, races, denominations, who believe wholeheartedly in the historical, liturgical pattern of worship. You're right. The blindness surrounding the issue is astounding. The insistence that the common trends of the day are most fitting for public worship is wrong and short-sighted. It's grieving that most churches now let Christians choose to not learn the historic creeds, or the great tradition of hymns and songs, or the great privilege of praying together and reading Scripture together. We've sacrificed so much of who we are.

I hate that organs are being silenced and dismantled. I mourn the loss of hymnals, four-part singing, printed word, a sense of order. I'm left hanging in a worship service without the opportunity to lift my voice with the congregation in response. I'm disoriented by not being expected to do any work. I have trouble with the idea of dividing congregations based on how worshippers supposedly “connect” to God. I'm frustrated that we've lost the sense of “sanctuary.” I'm confused why congregations don't see a homogenous group of worshippers as the tragedy it is. I don't get why so many churches don't seem to understand the difference between “butts in the seats” and “making disciples.” I'm tired of the show, the performance, the technology. I hate saying “traditional worship.” It's just worship. Liturgy. I'm weary of being told that I need to get over it. The worst thing that “contemporary worship” did when it came on the scene was to promote itself as just another worship option, and then get away with labelling the liturgy as a choice, also. When we make the conversation about preference, we don't get anywhere. It's not about taste or preference. It's about meaning.

I know this is an emotional issue for many of us, but we can't let our emotion dictate our response. The field is ripe for the contemporary church to re-engage with tradition, but fighting and arguing and contentiousness isn't going to help. The “Worship Wars” happened because so many of us were caught by surprise. Don't be caught by surprise anymore. Be well-reasoned, sensitive, and engaging.

The Eucharist is the natural culmination of worship, of proclamation. To outsiders, this is foolishness. To us, it is grace, mercy, healing, and preparation for the journey that awaits. We must be liturgical. The drama and rhythm of liturgical life keeps us anchored, gives us words to say, gives us a part to play.

To be in Christ is to be a new creation, a part of an already/not yet Kingdom. We must not be elitists. We must be intentionally theological. Everything we do in corporate worship should have a theological basis, from the instruments we use to the hymns we choose, to our prayers, anthems, and sermons, to how we do announcements. We must be open to new material, language, and influence. Every generation has had something of value to add to the great tradition of Christian worship.

We must put our hearts into what we're doing. And communicate that to our congregations. It's easy to go through the motions, be cynical, jaded. But this isn't about empty ritual. It's not about our preferences. It's the life and breath of our faith communities. We must gather together. Worship gatherings are not about “getting alone with Jesus.” It's about remembering who we are as God's people, and who we are to be in the world. It's about telling the Christian story.

We must be educators. Musical educators. Theological educators. Liturgical educators. We need to equip lay people to take an active role in church worship. Gathered worship is not peripheral. It's central to church life. It's the most important thing we do in our churches.

We've got to be generous, patient, empathetic, and understanding. Tradition will look different across denominations, geographical locations, and cultural context. And we're not simply rolling back the clock here. Reintroducing tradition is going to take time. It's not going to happen all at once, and we need to help congregants understand why we do what we do.

The bottom line is this. We don't keep tradition because it's tradition, or because it's old, or because it's comfortable, or because we like it. We keep tradition because it's worth doing. Because it anchors us. Because it's bigger than us. Because it reminds us that we're not alone. Because it keeps us honest. Because it helps us avoid

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(LETTER continued)

thinking that this worship thing is all about us. Because it accepts us as we are, but expects our participation in worship and beyond. Because it lets us engage our minds with our spirit. Because it builds up the church. It's time to be the church on Sunday, so that we can be the church every other day.

From a blog by Jonathan Aigner

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/ponderanew/2016/01/08/>

With thanks to André Hammond

From the archives

Elsewhere in this MESSENGER, one can read articles which discuss “contemporary” as opposed to “traditional” forms of worship in the Anglican Church. More specifically, these discussions may have a bearing on our efforts to ensure a viable future for Saint John the Baptist.

Our Steering Committee has been meeting with its counterpart at the Church of the Resurrection in Valois since, as we all know, a proposed merger of the two congregations may take place. The committee has been charged with trying to discover, among other things, the form of worship likely to be acceptable to any merged congregation which may result from this *union*.

In light of the disparity between adjacent liturgical practices, it was suggested that a passage from Barbara McPherson's report to vestry in 2006, should be published again – since it may help validate the situation as it exists in this church at a time when we find ourselves increasingly under pressure to change.

“At the Church of Saint John the Baptist, our use of The Book of Common Prayer, and the 1938 version of The Book of Common Praise – the blue hymnal – ensures a beauty of expression that cannot be matched by more accessible, modern texts. Innately poetic and otherworldly, far more elaborate than ordinary discourse, these texts are a constant reminder that our address is not to one another, but to the triune God... Consequently, the use of arcane language contributes to the intricacy and complexity of these compositions, often rendered even more difficult by the melodic and harmonic strategies employed by composers to best reflect the substance of the text.”

Whether one agrees with this hypothesis or not, it is worthwhile taking stock of what she has to say. Music remains one of the most powerful vehicles affecting human emotions and, as Barbara points out, composers over the centuries have found, in Christian liturgy, a well-spring of devout inspiration. However, as in day to day life, not everyone responds to the same musical styles or impulses; moreover, other circumstances may also affect how a piece

of music touches us. If it comes to a choice between The Book of Common Praise and what we euphemistically call “praise songs”, most of us will opt for “the blue hymnal” almost every time; however, surely one approach does not need to deny the other.

DLP, Editor

Steering Committee / January 2016

We hope that the new year finds you well, and are happy to present our first joint update on our Steering Committees. As you know, last Spring Special Vestries at both St John the Baptist (SJB) and Church of the Resurrection (COTR) selected six people (including their respective incumbents) to form two steering committees that would lead the parishes towards a possible merger. The Steering Committees would not make any decision themselves, rather, they would craft recommendations that would then be voted on by our respective parishes. Since then, the Steering Committees from both parishes have been primarily focused within their own parish to get a stronger sense of what would be most important to them. This work continued through the fall and in December we were ready to meet. Our first meeting was a non-structured one, our only goal was to allow the members of both of the Steering Committees to get to know one another. Our next meeting, took place in early January where we began to tackle some of the substantive issues. We will meet next on January 27th to continue our discussions.

We are still early in our discussions and took some time at our last meeting to review the “**Aim**” and “**Guiding Principles**” we both agreed upon last Spring and then to discuss some of the building blocks and stumbling blocks we see that might arise. We are including the text of the “**Aim**” and “**Guiding Principles**” to this update in order to remind ourselves of the important and challenging work we are doing.

Aim:

The aim of an amalgamation of the Church of the Resurrection and the Church of St John the Baptist is to continue to provide our parishioners with a sustainable place of worship and Christian action well into the foreseeable future and, through that, to position ourselves to become increasingly relevant to our community.

Guiding Principles:

1. **Evaluating** what is truly important versus what is not so important – in other words distinguishing the sacred from the sacred cows.
2. **Planning and building together** to emphasize continuity while fostering integration
3. **Honouring traditions** while accepting change.
4. **Balancing sacrifices and concessions** so that no one feels this is a win-lose situation.
5. **The objective is a single and unified congregation.**

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(STEERING continued)

At our Special Vestries in the Spring we had hoped that we might get some recommendations before our Annual Vestry meetings this year. We will not be able to do that. We were too ambitious with that time-line but we have, nonetheless, been able to make a start on our work. This is an important process and must be given the time it needs to craft recommendations that everyone is comfortable with. If you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact any of the members of the Steering Committees:

COTR - Joan Bartlett, Ross Hamilton, Laura Hill, Gladys Randle, Rev. Sophie Rolland, Paul Van Esbroek.

SJB - Diane Allen, Gaynor Care, Valerie Delacretaz, Rev. Lorne Eason, David Johansen and Robert Sutherland.

Prayer Chain

Because of the interregnum, the parish prayer chain was suspended until the appointment of a new incumbent. Now that that is a reality, the Prayer Chain has been reactivated.



If you have any concerns for which you wish prayers to be offered, please forward these requests to one of the following individuals.

- Reverend Lorne Eason** 514-697-1714
- Angela Deslauriers** 514-696-8320
- Margaret Paterson** 514-695-7148

Our Father and our God,

As we stand at the beginning of this new year we confess our need of Your presence and Your guidance as we face the future.

In the midst of life's uncertainties in the days ahead, assure us of the certainty of Your unchanging love. As we look back over this past year we thank You for Your goodness to us—far beyond what we have deserved. May we never presume on Your past goodness or forget all Your mercies to us, but may they instead lead us to repentance, and to a new commitment to make You the foundation and center of our lives this year.

And so, our Father, we thank You for the promise and hope of this new year, and we look forward to it with expectancy and faith. This I ask in the name of our Lord and Savior, who by His death and resurrection has given us hope both for this world and the world to come.

From a Prayer for the New Year, Rev. Billy Graham

Vicar's Vignette

Weight Watchers for Lent?



My wife and I were sitting at the kitchen table the other day and she turned to me and said, ever so coyly, "How would you like to join Weight Watchers?" I looked down at my midsection turned to her and replied quizzically, "Do you think?"

For some strange reason, that short dialogue between my wife and I reminded me of Bishop Mary Irwin-Gibson's challenge posed to those who attended the Oct. 2015 Diocese of Montreal conference synod, where she said, ".....consider taking on one new thing and letting go of one thing." Hmmm, Take on Weight Watchers let go of weight? Probably not!



But the notion of taking on one new thing and letting go of one thing does bring to mind the season of Lent.

For it is during Lent, the 40 week-day period beginning on Ash Wednesday through to the end of Holy Saturday, that we spend time soul-searching as it were, examining our attitudes, and our actions in light of God's love and his word; recognizing and acknowledging that we are not complete nor whole as God originally intended. We simply miss the mark of God's standard of goodness originally set in the genesis of our creation, and we cannot attain that standard by our own efforts. It is not within our capacity.

However it is during Lent that we are reminded that life is a precious gift from God, that God in his grace, mercy and love makes us complete and whole, good by His standard, through faith in the redeeming life, death and resurrection of Christ. And so we pray and repent and make resolutions and commitments to change our lives to be more like Jesus. You might say, **we take on one new thing and let go of one thing.**

Perhaps its not so far fetched to ask God to reveal to us this Lenten season whether there might be one new thing to take on and one thing to let go of in preparation to celebrate God's redeeming love in Jesus this Easter.

Come to think of it maybe I should seriously consider joining Weight Watchers. After all, they do say that by following their program I'll be motivated to drop 10lbs in 2 months.

Take on one new thing and let go of 10 perhaps?

It kind of fits the Bishop's challenge.

Yours in Christ, Lorne



Why and Whither

While investigating the link provided by André (Page 2), Mr. Google coughed up a large selection of articles about ‘traditional versus contemporary’ worship. Many of these seemed to be quite biased discourses – from both camps. The following extracts, however, were interesting because of their context. They are taken from a recorded conversation between the Pastor and the Musical Director of Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago, Illinois. This congregation numbers upwards of 2500 people and the church boasts a 126-rank Aeolian-Skinner organ, seven choirs, and a professional brass octet. So one might wonder why the two men embarked on this “conversation” about the efficacy of one form of liturgy or another!

Perhaps a clue lies in Sherer’s statement early on in the conversation that “... we have entered a post-Christian society that began with the Enlightenment, but that greatly accelerated in the late twentieth century...”

On this basis the discussion progressed. What conclusions of our own can we draw?

• **A huge change** affecting all churches is the increase of technology in worship. Every bit as big as the Gutenberg Bible, this change is manifested through big screens, blaring sound systems, tele-evangelism, compact disks, and computers. All these technologies changed how the church worships God. There has been a burst of new hymns and praise choruses, of which we are currently in the process of separating the wheat from the chaff. It will be our children who will decide how well we have done this. There is an old saying, “Whoever weds the popular culture of today will become a widow in the next generation.” That is why it is so important to do music that is destined to survive, so our children can be hearing this music and know this music when they become adults.

• **My guess is** that for most of us, who we are, what we believe, and how we view the world, was shaped originally by our experience of public worship. I can recall with precision what the church in which I worshiped as a child looked like. I can recall the feel of the pew cushion, the slightly musty odor, sun streaming through the stained glass window of Jesus praying in the garden Gethsemane. I spent a lot of time looking at that window, wondering at how young Jesus looked, how seemingly unconcerned with what was happening around him – you could see the vague shape of Peter and his friends sleeping in the background – at how clean his white robe was. I can recall Mary Wertz playing the organ up in the loft, of singing with my parents “Holy, Holy, Holy,” “For the Beauty of the Earth,” and “This is my Father’s World.” I can recall the people who sat around us – my Uncle Charles and Aunt Helen always on the aisle, the Crawfords immediately in front of us, the Winters directly behind us – Diane, and Paul, who

is now a jazz musician and artist in residence at St. John the Divine, who recorded and plays with whale songs and wolf howls and who, although standing outside the church and traditional theology, finds a way to bring Bach and Isaac Watts and “Abide with Me” into his music. I remember staring at Mrs. Crawford’s fabulous fox fur which she wore wrapped over her shoulders. The fox head, with glass eyes, was directly in front of me, and he and I spent many an hour staring at each other. I recall mints from Mother’s purse, and Dad’s railroad watch which he took from his vest pocket and wound, a little too ceremoniously, when he decided the preacher had gone on long enough. A lot about who I am, and what I believe, was put in place, or at least framed, by that experience of worship.

• **We live in** interesting times, do we not? Postmodernism has washed away the world with which most of us are familiar. We have to learn a new vocabulary and a new geography, and now new global politics. Part of what is in the very air out there is a longing for certainty, for something to hold on to. And in the midst of that, here comes traditional religion with a very serious and very precious proposal – namely a God whose very *Godness* transcends everything that is happening in the world, yet is somehow deeply present in it; a God whose *Godness* is behind all of life, all of existence, but who also loves each of us as if there were only one of us to love; a God who lives in unknowing mystery, but comes as close as human love, a human birth, a very human life.

• **The truth is** we have a problem, and people like us haven’t been very good or helpful in dealing with it. The problem is that a seismic cultural shift has happened, and is still in process, and our very best thinkers are struggling to understand it, name it, and describe it for us. There are a thousand ways to define it. One of them is ecclesiastically, or theologically. Martin Marty quotes a new book about what is happening to Christianity in Europe – the old Christendom. The late Henri Nouwen, whose name still resounds around the Yale Divinity School, made a melancholy trip before he died to his boyhood home in the Netherlands. Not long ago ninety-eight per cent of Dutch people attended church regularly; today it’s under ten percent. Almost half the church buildings in Holland have been converted into restaurants, galleries, condominiums, or have been destroyed. An institution – the church, and an ethos – Christendom – that dominated Western Europe for fifteen hundred years is changing radically, dramatically, and in one sense disappearing right before our eyes. And given history’s inexorable movement from East to West, one has to wonder about the future of religion and the institutional church here, and its traditions, its practice of worship in the future.

The Rev. Dr. John M. Buchanan served as pastor the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago for thirty years, retiring in 2012.

John W. W. Sherer has been the Organist and Director of Music since 1996 for the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago.



*If you really need another reason to sing, join the choir!
Party time, courtesy of Bruce and Barbara, January 7th.*

Coffee Anyone?

I don't know about you, but I really appreciate that cup of coffee or tea after the Sunday service; on several occasions, we have also been treated to a cookie or a piece of cake.



Now the goodies are a non-compulsory bonus, but the hot drink is a welcome gift which makes it doubly disappointing to find the hall door locked on Sunday mornings. If you can offer to sign up for an occasional *barista* duty, many in the congregation will be most appreciative.

Free, gentle instruction is available apparently; the sign-up list is on the bulletin board in the narthex.



Or pancakes and sausages?

Shrove Tuesday • Feb. 9th

5.45 p.m. – 7.00 p.m.

Adults : \$8.00

Children under 12 : \$4.50

Immediate Family ... \$22.00

... plus a non-perishable item for a Food Bank!

ALL PROCEEDS TO CHRISTIAN ACTION

Shaggy Dog

A man is driving along a Laurentian dirt road when he sees a sign in front of a broken down cottage: 'Talking Dog For Sale'. He rings the bell and the owner appears and tells him the dog is in the backyard. The guy goes into the backyard and sees a nice looking spaniel sitting there.

'D'you talk?' he asks. 'Yep,' the dog replies..

After the man recovers from the shock of hearing a dog talk, he says 'So, what's your story?'

The spaniel looks up and says, 'Well, I discovered that I could talk when I was pretty young. I wanted to help the government, so I called CSIS. In no time at all they had me jetting from country to country, sitting in rooms with spies and world leaders, because no one figured a dog would be eavesdropping. I was one of their most valuable spies for eight years running... But the jetting around really tired me out, and I knew I wasn't getting any younger so I decided to settle down. I signed up for a job at the airport to do some undercover security, wandering near suspicious characters and listening in. I uncovered some incredible dealings and was awarded a batch of medals. Later, I got married, had a mess of puppies, and now I'm just retired.'

The visitor is amazed so he goes back to the owner and asks how much he wants for the dog.

'Ten dollars,' he is told.

'Ten dollars? This dog is amazing! Why on earth are you selling him so cheap?'

'Because he's a liar. He never did any of that stuff.'



Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that,
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree, an' a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
It's coming yet, for a' that,
That man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that.



From 'A man's a man for a' that': Robert Burns

Please place contributions in the MESSENGER envelope outside the Office or send to the Editor:

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