

**Introduction to The Future Interim Event, November 17, 2019**  
**Grace and Holy Trinity Church, Richmond, VA**  
**The Rev. Bill Queen, "Hopes and Dreams for the Future"**



let's start off today by looking at this image above; you see a road sign depicting the directions past, present, and future; these are different time frames; they can also represent different mental attitudes; if you are focused on the past, to the exclusion of considering the present or the future, you are missing out; if you are focused on the present, to the exclusion of considering the past or the future, you are missing out; if you are focused on the future, to the exclusion of considering the past or the present, you are missing out; any one of these exclusive focuses, if taken too far, can lead to a lack of perspective and to a limited view of our place in time

in contrast to having only one temporal focus, Christianity has a perspective that is timeless; in our liturgy we affirm that "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again"; we affirm that "As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever"; within our faith, past, present, and future coexist in an inseparable relationship to each other, much like the inseparable relationship between God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit; our faith is built upon events of the past, but it is lived out in the present, and it is informed by the expectations of the future that come to us as promises from God; we continually live as Christians in this intersection moment of past, present, and future; this prayer and Bible readings convey this idea of the importance of past, present, and future

**Collect for the Future of the Human Race**

O God our heavenly Father, you have blessed us and given us dominion over all the earth: Increase our reverence before the mystery of life; and give us

new insight into your purposes for the human race, and new wisdom and determination in making provision for its future in accordance with your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

this reminds us that our actions today are laying the foundation for the future; and not just for our future, but to some degree for the future of all people and for this planet upon which we all depend; the quality of everyone's future depends upon choices that we make, today

### **Jeremiah 29:4-7, 10-14**

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. ... For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

these promises to ancient Israel are promises to us, too; we see that God has plans for our future, and that the promises God has made in the past will be received in the future, and it is this hope for the future which sustains God's people in the present; and again we see how our present and future are both tied to the people around us, in our city, to whose welfare we must attend; our welfare is bound up with everyone else's

### **Psalms 145:1-7, 13**

I will exalt you, O God my King, and bless your Name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless you and praise your Name for ever and ever. Great is the LORD

and greatly to be praised; there is no end to his greatness. One generation shall praise your works to another and shall declare your power. I will ponder the glorious splendor of your majesty and all your marvelous works. They shall speak of the might of your wondrous acts, and I will tell of your greatness. They shall publish the remembrance of your great goodness; they shall sing of your righteous deeds. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; your dominion endures throughout all ages.

this reminds us that one generation (the present one, us) must convey the knowledge of God and of God's works to another (the future one); it's up to us to witness to all of God's great goodness (from things of the past);" in each of our days we are to remember that eternity has already begun for us

### **Philippians 3:10-16**

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.

Paul writes that he is "forgetting what lies behind" (in the past), aware that (in the present) he has not "already reached the goal", but he is "straining forward to what lies ahead" (in the future); like him we are never in a place where we can sit back and think that our relationship with God, with God's people, and with God's creation cannot be deepened

### **Matthew 9:16-17; 13:51-52**

Jesus said, "No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved. ... Have you understood all this?" They answered,

“Yes.” And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” When Jesus had finished these parables, he left that place.

here Jesus gives us several parables, about new cloth’s unsuitability for being sewn onto an old cloak; about old wineskins’ inability to contain new wine; and about the scribe trained for the (future) kingdom bringing “out of his treasure what is new and what is old”; these multifaceted images all suggest that we continually live as Christians in this intersection moment of past, present, and future

another way of thinking about this blending of time perspectives is to consider the idea of being on a pilgrimage; for centuries pilgrims set out on pilgrimages with great uncertainty; they knew the destination (the future) towards which they were heading; but they were not pioneers; they were following in the footsteps of those who had gone before them (the past); they may have started off alone, but soon might find themselves traveling in the company of other pilgrims; they often had to rely on their fellow pilgrims, and on helpful residents along the way to figure out the particular local routes that would get them safely to their final destination; pilgrims travelled light, often depending upon gifts of food or alms from others; pilgrims took their time, recognizing that what might be learned along the way (the present) was as important as what they received when arriving at their destination; and pilgrimages were dangerous journeys, as travel in the open exposed them to the extremes of weather, to wild animals, and to bandits

the entirety of our life of faith can similarly be seen as a pilgrimage; we know the destination towards which we are heading, a deeper relationship with God, with God’s people, and with God’s creation both in this life and onward into eternity; we are not pioneers, but are following in the footsteps of those who have gone before us; we follow the footsteps of Christ himself we also follow the footsteps of the saintly women and men whose lives of faith have left us records of how to live a godly life; and we follow the footsteps of the lesser saints we have known personally in our lives who have helped us learn to walk the right paths towards God; we are never alone, but from the moment of our baptism have had parents, godparents, and church families to help and guide us; we still have to figure out the particular decisions and habits of life—our particular pathways—that will lead us safely to our final

destination; the Bible encourages us to travel light through life, so that the cares and occupations of our possessions do not burden or distract us; what we learn and share along the way of our faith journey is as important as what we will receive at our final destination; and yes, too, the pilgrimage of a life of faith can be a dangerous journey, as there are no guarantees that the road will not be difficult, that detours will not tempt us, or that we will not lose our way entirely

the way we prepare for the future of GHTC can benefit from this pilgrimage thinking too; while no one can really know what the future will bring, it is important and helpful for us to acknowledge and share our hopes and dreams for what our future might look like together; what we are doing this morning is preliminary work; we are not going to be making decisions about the future of this parish; but by exploring these things now, by getting you to think about it, some of the groundwork will be done, which will help your new Rector hit the ground running, and continue working with you on more specifics about your future together; so, with these biblical and theological perspectives in mind, we'll continue with our The Future Event's activities