

Address to Grace and Holy Trinity Church, Richmond VA  
Annual Meeting, February 2, 2020, The Rev. Bill Queen

Fellow workers in the vineyard of Grace and Holy Trinity Church:

You can read my written report on page 3 of your booklet at your leisure. I'd like briefly now to expand upon a couple of things I mentioned there.

In the 2nd paragraph from the bottom I list the three areas of focus for your Vestry's work for the next six months. Your new Vestry will soon meet for a day-long retreat to decide how to put those priorities to work, but this work cannot be done solely by members of your Vestry. They are going to be looking for ways to involve as many of you as possible, so we can begin to make some meaningful advances in these areas before the new Rector arrives, six months or so from now. So be open to helping if you are asked. But also, instead of waiting for them to come looking for you, it would be helpful if you came to any one of them first, letting them know if you have a special interest and desire to help in any of those areas. They are, as you will find them listed in my written report: 1) faith engagement via welcoming and including; 2) children, youth, and families; and 3) communicating with transparency as a way to deepen our community ties. It takes an entire parish to raise up and extend Christ's ministries.

In the final paragraph of my written report I have another list of the basic characteristics of what makes this parish meaningful to those of you who are already here and what makes it attractive to those who are not yet here: the quality of your ministries; your community spirit; and your welcome to all who walk through these doors. These are not special projects to work on, nor programs to implement. They are the very mindset we need to call upon every time we are in this building or we are involved in the work of this parish.

You already do these, to a great extent, but remember that God is always calling us to look for ways we can improve our ministries and deepen our relationships. So let me repeat them in a paraphrase and commend them to your efforts: care enough about God's work here to do it better and better; care enough about each other to treat each other better and better; and care

enough about those outside of this parish to help them feel more and more like they belong here.

I want to remind you about something I preached about many months ago, that the Sunday church experience has three distinct and important components for all ages: worship, fellowship, and education. I encourage all of you to plan your timing on Sundays so that you can take advantage of all three. Within some of these regular ongoing activities we are in need of volunteers: for Altar Guild leadership, for ushers for our later two services (esp. for 8:45), for acolytes, for readers and chalice bearers for our later two services (again esp. for 8:45), for helping prepare breakfasts, and for helpers with Children's Chapel and Sunday School. If you are not already volunteering in one of these areas, consider how you might help out in one of these important teams who help make our Sunday worship, fellowship, and education for all ages possible.

Looking ahead to other things to come in the next six months, I am making a special effort to plan interesting and participatory adult formation activities for every Sunday. We continue to be blessed by the additional option of having Bible Study available during our education time. During Lent we are planning a Lent series that will utilize both Sunday mornings and five Wednesday evening programs, with dinner, all on the topic of "The Way of Love," a particular emphasis of our Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry.

In the area of children's ministries, Kim and I, in the later two services, will begin splitting our responsibilities so that the preacher handles everything in the first half of the service, freeing the other clergy person to participate in Children's Chapels. Kim, Aaron, and I are making some changes to the 8:45 service to make it more participatory for children and youth. We are going to include children's homilies once or twice a month, in the church, in place of Children's Chapel on those days. Also, Aaron and I are planning to continue formation throughout the summer months with an intergenerational arts-focused series where we will use drawing, creativity, and visual thinking as a means of drawing all of our age groups closer together, as we draw ourselves closer to God.

Our Shrine Mont parish weekend is scheduled for September 18-20 and we hope that individuals and families who have never been to Shrine Mont will consider attending, along with those who have gone before. We plan to have clergy participation and an engaging program for all ages. We also hope that families will look into Shrine Mont summer camps for their children.

Enrollment is going on now, and camps fill up fast. In my experience Shrine Mont camps and other such retreat experiences have some of the greatest influence upon the faith development of children, youth, and adults alike. So take advantage of these opportunities.

When we turn to the budget report further down our agenda you will see that the Vestry, after careful thought, prayer, and deliberation, has decided not to budget any funds to be spent in 2020 towards a 2021 overseas mission trip. We have no doubt that good work has been accomplished in Belize and that our parishioners, and others, have benefitted from this ministry. At the same time we have to recognize that the past several years have seen conflicts and strained relationships arise from this ministry with clergy, staff, Vestry, and parishioners. Lately the planning and execution of the mission trips have happened at arm's length from the normal channels of parish planning, and no clergy or staff have been on the trips.

This is not an ideal situation to hand over, as is, to the new Rector. Our plan is to constitute a ministry and mission working group, that I will lead, to evaluate how international work meshes with our domestic work. We will consider, should we do international work? If so, how do we structure it so that the planning involves clergy, staff, and Vestry? Should we go to Belize, or elsewhere? It is quite possible that trips to Belize may resume, but that is not a given. And it is necessary to put a 2021 trip on hold while we are rethinking both organization and purpose. No planning for a future trip will happen until the new Rector arrives and can take my place as the leader of the working group. Our intent is to bring the arm's length approach to this ministry into a full embrace by the leadership of the parish.

Closer to home, remember that we have parishioner Paul Evans in his first year at Virginia Theological Seminary preparing for ordination to the priesthood. Dawn McNamara is moving forward in the steps towards Deacon's School and eventual ordination to the vocational diaconate. There is a lot of God's good work being done here at Grace and Holy Trinity. I am blessed to be able to work along with you during this interim year. I believe we are making great progress in preparing for the arrival of your new rector. Keep up the good work!