



Easter Letter

2014

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings in the name of our risen Lord Jesus! As we celebrate the death and resurrection of God's Son, we also celebrate the unfolding life and work of salvation here at St. Timothy's. In a culture that sees death as the end and pain as something to be avoided or denied, Christians have a unique perspective from the foot of the cross. St. Paul reminds us, "If we have died with him, we shall live with him; if we hold firm, we shall reign with him" (2 Timothy 2.11-12). We experience this dying and rising with Christ in the moment of our baptism, when we are signed with the sign of the cross. We know it again every Sunday, which marks the resurrection at Easter. And we recognize it in those times in our lives when we grieve a loss, only to find that life comes in a new way. Good Friday is good because it is a necessary precursor to Easter Sunday. The sacrifice, we see in retrospect, is God's mystery of love for us. We are invited into that mystery, to struggle and share in the passion of winning all of creation around us.

This Eastertide marks a significant moment in our community's history. For eleven years, this new Anglican parish has served out of the Brentwood site of the old Christ the King, together with the resources and prayerful support of the former St. Nicolas. When the church was renovated and rededicated as St. Timothy's on October 15, 2003, it was envisioned that a ten-year timeline would bring us to the point of expansion. The building was deliberately only renovated to be safe and functional for the existing small congregation. Now we have grown more fully into our identity and have lived with the limitations and possibilities that this site offers. Diocesan bodies have confirmed that we are a vital parish in a strategic location. Now God calls us to act out our commitment to the Gospel in this sacred space.

From 2003-2013, St. Timothy's has been involved in several assessments of our ministry and mission. The original strategic plan for the merged parishes of St. Nicolas and Christ the King into St. Timothy's took us from 2002-2005. A new three-year strategic plan to keep working towards sustainability was proposed in 2006. In 2009, the Diocese implemented a Mission review of every parish, including a financial and building assessment. From 2010-2012, St. Timothy's was instructed by the Diocese to participate in a regional Ministry Assessment Process (M.A.P.) with five other parishes. This delayed our parish strategic plan; that was then proposed for 2012-2015. As a result of M.A.P., potential partners for ministry were re-directed to other tasks (St. Margaret of Scotland, St. Stephen, St. Laurence) and St. Timothy's was seemingly left at a crossroads.

A cross-roads is not necessarily a bad place to be. The difficulty is choosing which path forward best serves God's mission to love and reconcile creation. An initial request for assistance in planning was sent to Diocesan Council in June 2013. In the absence of a response over the summer, the parish concentrated on deepening discussion about our identity in Christ. A long-delayed but important meeting was finally held with Diocesan

representatives on February 27, 2014. At that point, we were pushed on the question of what ministry we can do well to God's glory here and therefore what we need to carry it forward. We were also told that the financial resources for ministry must come from within this community, although there are creative ways that the Diocese may assist this happening. Most importantly, however, the function must shape the form. In other words, God's purpose for us must mold our community into a pleasing shape.

Conversations at the level of Leadership Team and Parish Council have determined that our main areas of discipleship are ministry with families, support of seniors, and services to the needy. The leadership of St. Timothy's has come to a decision that in order to expand these core activities at this facility, some significant changes to our building must happen. In addition, there are some emerging issues regarding the building structure that must be addressed in a timely manner, such as a roof will need to be replaced in the next five years and seepage in the foundation. Like good stewards, we will need to sit down and count the cost before we build.

The first priority, however, is to get your input on ministry and redevelopment. The congregation must identify a couple of foundational projects that are important in the making and deepening of discipleship through this community. How are we going to share the good news, teach new believers, help people in need, work to make things fairer, and look after the planet?¹ How are we going to do these from the foundation of our Anglican and Lutheran heritages? And then, what do we need physically to do so?

On Saturday April 26, 2014, from 3-5 pm,

You are invited to gather with the parish community to join the conversation at a very important congregational meeting. In this time, we will be discussing ideas for ministries in our three identified areas of families, seniors, and the needy, and imagining what our physical plant could look like to accomplish these ministries. We will also identify some important next steps, including groups to determine methods of communication, a timeline, talents in the parish, and a budgeting process. Please make every effort to attend this session. You can also send your ideas, comments, and sketches to our Parish Office email: office@sainttimothy.ca. We would love to receive and consider everything you think would be helpful, including photos of functional church or community kitchens, meeting and storage spaces, handicapped washrooms, or notes on successful building expansions.

Eleven years ago, when we were setting out on the next stage of our pilgrimage with God by moving down to this site, we came up with a parish mission statement. In it, we said that the people of St. Timothy's aspire to be a welcoming Christian community in North Burnaby, living in God's way by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Let's take a fresh look at what that means for us today in light of the resurrection, as we rise again to new life.

Yours in Christ,

Stephanie

The Rev. Stephanie Shepard, Rector

¹ The Five Marks of Mission, Anglican Church of Canada.