

Rector's Report for Christ Church Eureka Annual Meeting February 2, 2020

Fr. Daniel London

Readings for the Presentation of Our Lord
Malachi 3:1-4; Psalm 84; Hebrews 2:14-18; Luke 2:22-40

“Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in palaces of unrighteousness.” Psalm 84:10

A few weeks ago, the great great granddaughter of our founder Thomas Walsh reached out to us and asked if she could visit this church with her husband on a Saturday morning. I was still in Houston when I received her email, but I made sure that I would be back in time to meet her and give her a tour of the campus. Her name is Teresa Flor and her husband is Tom and they were both pleased to learn that we are now celebrating our 150th anniversary as they were greeted by the chair of our sesquicentennial planning committee Belinda Zander and our verger Thomas Swanger on Saturday January 12th (which also happened to be the six-year anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood.) I arrived home from Houston just in time to give Teresa and Tom a tour of the church; and as I did, I shared with them our mission, which is to glorify God, follow Jesus Christ and serve all people through the power of the Holy Spirit; and our core values of worship, discipleship, fellowship, outreach, and hospitality.



I explained that we have been practicing hospitality this year by not only maintaining but *enhancing* our campus and buildings, which are used by over a hundred people each week. This year, we repainted our chapel prayer labyrinth, replaced the chairs in Lewis Hall, renovated the Pierson Room, completed and blessed the Fr. Doug Memorial Library, transformed part of the basement into a children's art studio, upgraded

outdoor lighting and campus safety and so much more, all while responding to acts of vandalism, including arson at our front door. (Take a look at the Junior Warden report in the Annual Meeting booklet to see all the work we've accomplished this year on campus). Also, this year, we served as

the hub for the Eureka Heritage Society Home Tour in early October, showing hospitality to hundreds of people, who were awestruck by this historical hidden gem.



I told Teresa and Tom about some of the ways we uphold the value of outreach here by supporting local ministries and non-profit agencies such as the Betty Chinn Foundation, the Food Bank, The Forgotten Initiative, Humboldt Domestic Violence Services and St. Vincent de Paul's as well as international ministries (like Episcopal Relief and Development) that serve people in need all around

the world, especially in the Holy Land and in our sister diocese of Honduras. Also, in May, we hosted a Town Hall meeting on the issue of transitional housing coordinated by the True North Organizing Network, garnering more community support for Betty Chinn and other homeless outreach services in Humboldt County.

Our other core value of fellowship reminds us that we are all part of God's family, all brothers and sisters in Christ. As members of God's family, we check in with each other during coffee hour and throughout the week by making a phone call or sending a note or cooking someone soup or bringing someone Eucharist or offering a simple prayer. This fellowship extends beyond this earthly realm as we join our voices with all the company of heaven and remember the saints who have passed through the gateway we call death. Through worship, we have a kind of fellowship with those whom we love but see no longer. Although we continue to grieve over the loss of Mary McClaran Ambrosini, Eve McClaran, Dr. Bill Taylor, Keith McCloghrie, Dan Vega, Jill Stover, and Pat Toy (who passed away this last year), we also know that for God's faithful



people, life is changed not ended and that we Christians look at death through the lens of Easter Resurrection.

This last year we also had to let go of our parochial mission church in Trinidad, Sts. Martha and Mary, which has recently closed down as the Presbyterian church seeks to sell the building where they previously met. Although there is sadness, there is also joy as members of Sts. M & M now join us in worship here and as we look forward to new ministry opportunities and new life together. And speaking of new life, three spritely souls (Reina, Kamryn, and Heather) were welcomed into God's



beloved family this year through the sacrament of baptism, an uplifting sign of growth, new birth and resurrection life.

I also told Teresa about the many opportunities we have offered for discipleship this year as part of our sesquicentennial celebration. Starting in September, we have had a special guest each month offer us wisdom and guidance in

following Jesus Christ. The Very Rev. Don Brown (former dean of Trinity Cathedral in Sacramento) gave a presentation and guest sermon on the Holy Cross, just a couple weeks after we installed our glorious golden cross on our steeple, with the help of Danco Builders and a cherry picker. In October, Catherine Mace gave a presentation on our church's history, a presentation that has now evolved into an article that will appear in the Spring issue of the Humboldt Historian. In November, spirituality author Suzanne Guthrie prepared us for the liturgical year with a day-long retreat and



workshop in the chapel; and in December, Pastor Dan and Karen Price helped us explore the immanence and transcendence of God vis-à-vis theologians Karl Barth and Richard Rohr.

Earlier in the year, during the season of Lent, I offered an Introduction to the Episcopal Church class on Sundays for those interested in baptism, confirmation and reaffirmation (which I will offer again this year as we prepare for Bishop Megan's visit in May). I also led a Tuesday Soup Supper class on Celtic Christianity followed by a Pentecost presentation on my pilgrimage to Iona, Scotland. This was especially exciting to share with Teresa because she told me about an Anglican parish called St. Andrew's in Northern Ireland in which Thomas Walsh grew up and was baptized. I've reached out and made contact with church leaders at St. Andrew's and learned that they recently celebrated their 200th anniversary; and I'm now dreaming and wondering if we should consider a future parish pilgrimage not only to Iona, Scotland but also to the church in Ireland in which our founder was baptized. Perhaps we can even form a sister parish relationship with St. Andrew's in Ireland so that we can support each other and they can visit us here as well. Why not? I feel inspired to dream big since we owe our church's existence to the dream and prayer and vision of our founder Mr. Thomas Walsh.

At the very first vestry meeting of Christ Church Eureka, Thomas Walsh said, "My earnest prayer is, and will be for the prosperity of this Church; Peace be within her walls, and plenteousness to all those who go therein." Mr. Walsh then referenced the Psalm that we just chanted together this morning as part of our Candlemas service: Psalm 84. Thomas Walsh said, "I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in palaces of unrighteousness." Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere. Amen, Mr. Walsh. Whenever we gather here on Sunday mornings to uphold our primary core value of worship, to glorify God, Christ shows up as he did to Simeon and Anna in the temple two thousand years ago. Christ shows up in the bread and wine made holy, as he promised. Christ shows up in our relationships, as he did in our relationship with Cindy Woods, who was formed this last year *by our worship* to become the deacon she is today at St. Alban's in Arcata. Christ shows up in our Sacred Saunter gatherings at Sequoia Park, which we will certainly do again this Lent. Christ shows up through our many visitors, especially those who are cold and hungry. Christ shows up and will continue to show up here every time we gather here in the spirit of

love, humility, and compassion, to glorify God and to be joyful doorkeepers of God's House, knowing that one day in God's courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

After we took some pictures and temporarily parted ways, Teresa emailed me and said, "Tom and I cannot thank you enough for the warm hospitality you extended to us on our visit to Christ Church! We feel incredibly blessed to have had the opportunity to see the beauty and learn more of the history, but also to feel the spirit of Christ that embodies both your parish and staff... We also watched the video of you installing the new cross and I must say that we were equal parts moved and terrified! You are very brave and maybe a little crazy to be willing to work at that height. It was an act of faith and confidence in your Lord, I am sure... Tom and I look forward to another visit in the not too distant future! We will keep you...in our daily prayers."

May we continue to be brave and maybe a little crazy as we build upon the vision of Thomas Walsh and reach new heights as we dream big, with faith and confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ, whom God has prepared for all the world to see (through us), a light to enlighten the nations, and the glory of God's people. Amen.

