

Vicar's Report

A wise old minister once said that it's a good idea to develop not only a good memory, but also a good forgetory. What he meant by that was the importance of not remembering bad things that happen, slights said, or wrongs done by other people – being quick to forget is a virtue.

The past few months have been very much 'back to normal' for many of us. And it's easy to forget that our last AGM was by Zoom because we couldn't all be in the same room together! What a great thing it has been over these months to have the specter of covid restrictions removed, and for many things in church life to return to a similar state as they were before Covid. It's also been wonderful over this past year to see how our church has cared for each other as various people have fallen ill and been out of action with Covid – the love and care this church shows is extraordinary. There's much to rejoice in, and this report is a chance to offer my brief reflections on where we've been, how we are, and what we can do to walk together with the Lord into the future he has planned.

Our **Sunday services** have returned to largely as they were pre-covid, although as noted elsewhere, there has been a gradual movement of folk to the 9:30am service. Both services, however are in good heart. We've been helped to think about and engage with our singing, we've dug deeply into Scripture, we've heard people interviewed and sharing of their wins and struggles, and our welcome and engagement with people has been great. I think of particular joy has been seeing people sticking around more and more after the services – sharing their lives and spurring each other on in faith. While we haven't seen the same number of visitors or invitees as historically, we are still welcoming well. A move to one location will, we pray help in much of this.

Baptisms and **Confirmations** are always a highlight in a church's life, and seeing Amy, Theodore, Morgan, Lucy, Julia, Finn, Anita, Thomas, and Zachery baptized in this past year has been wonderful. Matthew, Mackenzie, Joy, and Pam were all confirmed by Bishop Jay. Let's ensure that we're still praying for them as they walk with the Lord.

We are well **served** by various people Sunday by Sunday, and I'm deeply thankful for this, because of what it says, and shows, about Trinity's grasp of the gospel. It's worth noting that churches – by and large – are becoming more and more 'consumeristic'. People come to church to receive, and move on when their needs aren't being met. I'm so thankful that Trinity isn't like that. One way we can continue to ensure that culture (and be teaching and helpful each other (and especially new and young Christians) to maintain that culture) is for us to continue to be preparing ourselves to come to church to give and serve. That may be through rosters and formal roles, but it will most definitely be in our prayer and preparation for turning up. Praying that God would give us eyes to see needs, and courage to act on them. Planning on getting to church 5 minutes early to sit with someone new. Preparing our hearts to confess our sin. Reading the passage before Sunday so we're ready to hear God speak. All these things are ways that we will maintain (and grow!) the wonderful 'togetherness' that the Lord has grown at Trinity.

Beyond Sundays, a good turnout at our regular parish **prayer meetings** is the heartbeat of our dependence upon God, and the Lounge at Archer Village is a good (and warm!) location for this going forward. I'm so thankful for your partnership in this vital ministry. A **Newcomers' lunch** welcomed a number of new folk to Trinity who are all settling in and taking their place as pillars of the church. Other **ministry reports** speak to the healthy state of the church – a wide range of ministries which are generally going really well. Thank you for your partnership in the gospel, dear friends.

Two **weekends away** over the past year have helped us re-express some of the unity we share as a church, and (re)developed good relationships between people, as did our combined service in October. The **sharing of food** has dwindled a little over our time at an afternoon service, and Covid certainly hasn't helped. And it's been pretty tricky to invite people into your home for lunch when church is at 4pm or finishes at 10:30! What a great opportunity our forthcoming changes to service time and location will make for the part of our life together – I do hope you'll embrace both offering and receiving **hospitality** with open arms.

Financially we are in a good place, and we continue to praise and thank God for David Wong's extraordinary skill-set as our Treasurer. It is worth observing, as David has pointed out in his report, that slightly fewer people in the church are giving regularly. As a matter of principle, I refuse to know how much people regularly give at church. But, I do want to say that the expectation of God's people is that we ALL give (2 Cor 8-9). The Bible ties our financial generosity to our grasp of God's generosity to us. Therefore, even if it feels like a very small amount, can I urge you to give generously? Giving to your local church is normal practice for a Christian. While I know that things are tight this year and prices are rising, we can still be courageously generous, trusting in our Lord to meet all our needs (2 Cor 9:8).

Personally, this past year has been busy for me, with some Diocesan involvement (Standing Committee), chairing the Latimer Fellowship, teaching at the TIM course, being involved in organizing the Australasian GAFCON Conference, as well as David away on extended leave. I've deliberately changed some of those things (TIM course, GAFCON involvement, refusing to let David out of my sight) and with the wardens I'm seeking to carefully manage out-of-parish activities during this year of change in preparation for taking up a new role in 2024.

I'm extraordinarily thankful to Aimee and Mackenzie and Karen for the extra work-load they shared throughout much of last year, especially with David away, and the current staff team's flexibility, sense of unity and servant heartedness. We are very blessed by those the Lord has given us to encourage and equip us in our ministries and Christian service. John and Tim have been great wardens, and Vestry has once again offered wise and careful counsel and reflection. I note Bruce Logan is not standing for re-election this year, and want to thank him for his service on Vestry.

Looking forward, I think there are three big things facing us this year. One is the **possible development of 253 Colombo Street**. Some excellent work has been done to consider the costs of this and how we might finance it. I am in the process of writing a piece on how we might think theologically and from a church ministry point-of-view about buildings (in general) and 253 Colombo Street (in particular). I hope to have this with you within a month so that the church can prayerfully consider whether we are willing and able to commit to this development. That will involve a few meetings as a church, and some work by all of us in conversation and prayer. Such things can bring about strong feelings, and strong words. Different people think and feel about large sums of money in different ways, and making big decisions like this can be unsettling. It will cost us a lot to have our own building, but there are also costs to not having our own building!

Another thing facing us is the process of appointing a **new Vicar**. I am not part of that process, and the Wardens will give us an update later in the AGM. But such times can be unsettling for a church, especially when Aimee is also finishing up at the end of the year. But I want to reassure you that churches go through this all the time, and that God has it all under control. We have a really good system in the Anglican church for appointing a Vicar, and I am praying both for the process and the person (whoever they are!) regularly. I do hope you'll join me in that, and come and talk to me if you're worried or anxious, and talk to the wardens about the details of the process.

The final thing face us, however, is the **most important**. And that's our normal, day by day, week by week, Sunday after Sunday, living out of our faith together. There's a real danger that with the unknown and unsettling other things going on that we take our eyes from our Lord. That we forget his sustaining and wonderful goodness to us in the past, and worry that he won't provide for us through this year. But he has never failed us. Through earthquakes, church mergers, disaffiliation, Covid – he has always been faithful. We can trust him. We can encourage and help each other to keep trusting him as we express our faith and partner together in the normal pattern of attending to our personal prayer and Bible reading. We encourage and help each other to keep trusting him as we commit ourselves to meeting together every week (for Christians weekly gathering with God's people is the norm and missed only reluctantly and unavoidably). We encourage and help each other to keep trusting him as we look around us in love and service, seeking the good of others before our own. We encourage and help each other to keep trusting him as we seek to share the gospel with those who don't yet know Christ. And we encourage and help each other to keep trust him as we commit ourselves to the Lord and his people here, living together in hope and expectation not only of Jesus' powerful work amongst us, but also his glorious return.

Yours together in his service

Dave