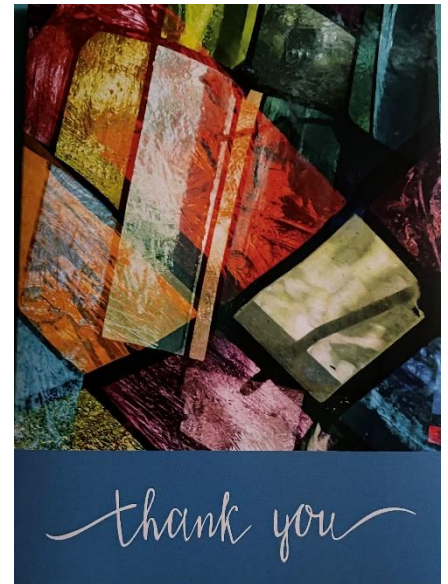


Stewards of God's Grace: December 2021

Thank God for parish leadership

What a year we have been through! Last year parishes across our diocese were scrambling to figure how (or if) they could provide on-line worship during a time of Covid lockdown. And we were all adjusting to an Advent season in which we could not hear one another sing "O come, O come Emmanuel" with yearning and hope. During the past year we have been through a plethora of emotions as we made various adjustments in how and where we worship, meet as Vestries and committees, provide pastoral care, participate in outreach programs, receive the offering, care for our buildings, etc. Many of us have become accustomed to the continual sanitizing of hands, wearing of masks and social distancing. Vaccines have made a huge difference and yet...we are still waiting for normal to return. In some ways we have been living Advent for an entire year—waiting, yearning, hoping for the completion of what is to what shall be. Exhausting, isn't it?



St. Paul gets it. In his letter to the church in Corinth, replying to their questions about how things were to be done and their complaints about one another, he wrote "we grow weary from the work of our own hands." (1 Corinthians 4:12a) The folks to whom he was writing didn't always agree with him and both asked for and challenged his leadership. He reminded them that they didn't belong to him but to Christ. He and other leaders (like Apollos or Peter) were to be thought of as "servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries." (1 Cor. 4:1) The word we translate as steward is actually οἰκονομος (oikonomos) and means someone to whom the head of the house has intrusted the management of their affairs, the care of receipts and expenditures, and the duty of dealing with things fairly. The early church expanded its meaning to metaphorically include the apostles and other Christian teachers and leaders. We now think of stewards as those entrusted by God to manage our time, our talents, our treasure and our testimony in ways that will honour our Creator. We are all stewards of God's mysteries and servants of Christ. We all have a role to play in parish life.

But let's take a moment to think particularly of those in leadership in our parishes who have learned new skills so we can worship online. Let's think of the clergy, lay readers, musicians and others who have adapted to these new circumstances. Let's remember the wardens and treasurers who have struggled to manage our parish finances when offering falls short and fund-raising is curtailed. Let's consider the people who have phoned, emailed and outdoor-visited people to provide pastoral care. Let's bring to mind those who oversee parish websites, Facebook pages and email lists so people can remain informed. Even when they have 'grown weary from the work of their hands' they have kept going and kept our parishes going over the past year. Thank God for them all!

And perhaps you might consider thanking them personally through a word, a phone call, a card or a small gift. As servants of Christ they have cared for us all in the midst of this pandemic and their efforts have not been in vain. Let them know that. Sometimes being thanked is the best gift there is!

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