

**Report of the Rector for the 2016 AGM
(26 February 2016)**

"A man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents ... But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time, the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents, came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents, see, I have made five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ... Then the one who had received the one talent came forward ..." (Matthew 25:14-24)

If you have read this report this far, then you may be scratching your head wondering why the Scripture passage ended right where it did. You should have some inkling of what is missing. (If you don't, grab your Bible and read Matthew 25:24-30!) I ended it right where I did intentionally. I would like you to ponder on what this passage means for this congregation. How many 'talents' has God entrusted to us? Are they many or are they few? Is "more" more important than "few"? Has God asked of us something that we aren't capable of or are we selling ourselves short when it comes to expectations?

Before you answer those questions, look at the 10 Year Statistics below and then look at the Financial Statements that indicate where we are sitting with investments. Then ponder for some significant time this statement: *God expects much of you but God never expects what you cannot give.* ... (Keep in mind that this statement does not say that God never expects what *you don't want to give!*)

So, now that you have looked at the stats and have taken some time to consider what God is calling this congregation to do, what can you discern?

When I see these numbers, I am saddened to see how few people are now coming to church and how much more sporadically others are choosing to come. Some people have become unable to attend church due to age and accessibility. Some people have made decisions to not come to church on Sundays for many and sundry reasons. (And I pray that they are finding other communities within which to worship if this is the case!) Others work and are called away from this spiritual home even though they wish to be here. Some may even be making the decision to not attend a church at all. And so, at first blush, these numbers seem to predict doom and gloom.

In contrast to these statistics, regardless of the projected shortfall in income we see every year, we continue to see growth in our investments, which is a good news story in itself! These numbers show a different potential outcome. They speak of the future and hope and the comfort of knowing that even if our congregation dwindles, there will always be enough to maintain the buildings! But isn't there something awry in that logic?

I was at a gathering recently in which a Bishop from Australia was quoted as saying, In the church, “more of the same is leading to less of the same.” How true this sentiment is where it comes to the church in the world as we know it. The world around us is changing and yet the church is trying desperately to hang on to the way things have always been. And we really are beginning to see “less of the same”. Doing everything the way we have always done it is beginning to look a lot like the efforts of the slave who buried the talent with which he was entrusted. At the end of the day he only had one talent, and it seems to have depreciated in value!

So, how can we shift our perspective? How can we change the lens through which we look at church and envision where God is in all of this? Maybe we need to simply ask the question, “Where is God working in all of these circumstances?”

Recently I asked one of the members of the Sunday School to tell me the way that God was working in Moses’ time. The answer I got was astounding in its depth. She named several of the downright miserable things that Moses was faced with, like slavery, being chased by the Egyptians, no food or water, etc. “But,” she said with great enthusiasm, “God parted the Red Sea, so they didn’t drown. He gave them manna and water when there wasn’t any. He led them to a new land they had never seen before ...” This young, theologically astute child reminded me that God is best seen working when nothing else seems to work!

Given that lesson from a Sunday School member, I am challenged to see that smaller numbers on Sunday leads to more intimate gatherings and potential for sharing prayers and stories and real honest-to-God relationships! Fewer people on Sundays means that we can really encourage one another because we will not simply be strangers sitting side by side but brothers and sisters who are missed when we are away for a Sunday and celebrated when we are here. “Community” can be our catch-phrase and it can truly be said with sincerity.

We could also look at those other numbers that are so promising in contrast and recognize that those numbers have grown to what they are because of the members of our community who have gone before us, like the master, entrusting us with all those talents, that have not been buried or squandered. They have been invested and they have grown. But the question must be asked, if those who entrusted it to us were to come back today to see what we had done with those talents, would they be pleased to see that sometimes it seems we have ‘buried’ those talents for fear that we might lose them? Yes, of course we must always think to the future of the church and ensure that the future is taken care of. Good fiscal stewardship is part of what made the slave with the five talents so prosperous. But the ‘talents’ the Gospel speaks of are not simply monies to be invested wisely. *Those talents are also indicative of what we do in God’s name and for God’s sake!*

Is it possible that God has granted us the gifts we have been given so that, as we come to those times of needing to break free of the bonds of slavery that are “the way it has always been” we might also see that God has provided us with the means to part the Red Sea, to feed us when ‘traditional’ food is scarce, to encourage us to take a chance as we venture into a new world we have not yet seen but in which God is already resident, just waiting for us as He was waiting in the Promised Land for Moses and the people he helped to set free?

God has given us so very many talents of many shapes and sizes: financial, people, talents in the more usual sense, and on and on. We have choices to make. We can choose to dwell on the stats that say our congregation is getting smaller. We can revel in the fact that our investments have been spectacular. Or we can choose to look at both of these 'realities' through God's eyes and begin to see the potential within.

We have been given the gift of a community small enough that we can truly make the effort to get to know each other – the way families know each other. We can pass the Peace of Christ speaking one another's names and looking in each other's eyes. We can honestly say that we will pray for one another and lend a hand, or receive help ourselves, because we will truly become a caring and intimate community of Jesus followers.

We can also begin to discern, interpret and understand what God is calling us to do – in addition to ensuring that the buildings outlive all of us – with the abundance of talents that God has provided through past parishioners over the years. What work could God be calling us to do within the greater Community outside our church walls? What investments might we be called to make in humankind on behalf of those brothers and sisters in Christ who have gone before us? What miracles (Moses' style) might God be just waiting to create through our church family once we open ourselves to unburying some of those talents and letting loose with the abandon of the Holy Spirit?

How might God be calling us to rewrite the end of that Gospel lesson?

It is up to all of you, the members of this faith community. God has called you by name and is waiting to hear you reply, "Here I am, Lord. Use me." Or, more aptly, "Here we are, God. Use us!"

As I wrap up my report, I would like to take the time to offer my thanksgiving to all of you for the many ways you have shared your talents with the congregation over the past year. So many people help pull the liturgies together, ensure that continuing education and spiritual growth opportunities are available, feed us and take care of others through small, and not so small ways. Thank you to you all.

In particular, I must offer my appreciation to a few people who have been 'right hand people' in the Rector's Office, namely the Wardens. Pat Pye, Norman Raine and Harry Grant have been wise and gentle co-workers as they made sure the day to day work of the church continues. I would also like to offer my appreciation for one of those people who never gets "acknowledged" but whose faithfulness is needed and much appreciated: Karen Simpson has been a gentle presence behind the scenes while contributing to the ongoing care of the parish. The wonderful birthday cards that are sent out are Karen's contribution to the Pastoral Care of the parish. Thank-you Karen for your creativity and contribution.

In closing, I would like to offer my thanks to God for allowing me the privilege and the responsibility of being Pastor, Priest, Teacher, Intercessor and Sister in Christ here at St. James, Armdale. It is a gift to serve with all of you.

This Report is respectfully submitted by The Reverend Rachael Parker.

Year	8:30	Comb	10	Avg	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
07	38	81	107	131	14	205	189	541	12	9	4	18
08	36	67	109	131	12	195	364	507	8	0	5	14
09	33	53	97	113	12	152	167	413	4	11	0	14
10	29	62	102	111	13	119	276	424	7	4	5	16
11	31	57	85	104	15	173	256	426	4	0	0	14
12	29	64	83	97	13	147	184	420	1	5	3	14
13	29	70	69	95	11	163	199	346	13	0	1	9
14	26	86	61	87	12	185	255	292	8	0	1	12
15	22	69	55	77	11	110	179	293	5	4	2	12
16	22	56	48	70	12	115	173	290	5	0	3	7

Code A = Wednesday services
C = Easter services (Easter Vigil and 8 & 10 Easter Day)
D = Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services
F = Confirmations
H = Funerals
B = Holy Week-Good Friday
E = Baptism
G = Weddings

Rector's Statistics – 2016

Meetings = 44
Pastoral Cards = 340
Worship Services = 166
Groups = 8 (Choir, Mothers' Union, Men's Group, ACW, etc.)
Requests for Assistance = 40
Book and Bible Study Sessions = 59
Extra-Parish Events = 115 (Baptism, Wedding and Funeral prep/mtgs, Scouts, Clericus, Regional Council, Supervision, HR VSST, Dio. Council, Ecumenical work, Spiritual Direction, non-Parish Church mtgs, Pastoral Care mtgs, Grief Debrief at The Club, mtg with Bishop, Nursing Home Memorial services, guest facilitating, etc.)
Regional Dean = 6
Phone Calls and Contacts = 239
Visits = 92
Nursing Home Services = 25
Conferences = 3

Rector's Continuing Education and Spiritual Development

Leadership Conference; Clergy Lenten Retreat; Spiritual Direction; Retreat Day x 2; Vital Church Maritimes Conference; Clergy Conference; Mission School: Module 1 (x2)

Books Read

Hybels, Bill	<u>Too Busy Not To Pray</u>
Coll O.S.J., Regina	<u>Supervision of Ministry Students</u>
Greene-McCreight, Kathryn	<u>I Am With You</u>
Sykes, Norman	<u>The Crisis of the Reformation</u>
Nouwen, Henri	<u>Circles of Love</u>
Doherty, Catherine de Hueck	<u>The Gospel Without Compromise</u>
Visser, Margaret	<u>The Geometry of Love: Space, Time, Mystery and Meaning In An Ordinary Church</u>
Israel, Martin	<u>Gethsemane: The Transfiguring Love</u>
Murray, Andrew	<u>Standing In the Gap</u>
Jennings, Jeremy	<u>The Church On Its Knees: Dynamic Prayer in the Local Church</u>
Vennard, Jane E.	<u>A Praying Congregation: The Art of Teaching Spiritual Practice</u>
Price, Reynolds.	<u>A Serious Way of Wondering: The Ethics of Jesus Imagined</u>
Tobin, Father Eamon.	<u>How To Forgive Yourself and Others: Steps to Reconciliation</u>
Drury, John.	<u>The Burning Bush</u>
Stossel, Scott.	<u>My Age of Anxiety: Fear, Hope, Dread and the Search for Peace of Mind</u>
O'Driscoll, Herbert.	<u>The Unshakeable Kingdom</u>
Berton, Pierre.	<u>The Comfortable Pew</u>
Searle, Mark, ed.	<u>Parish: A Place of Worship</u>