

The first part of this report was given verbally, without notes. Fr. Tony expressed his appreciation for the kindness and good will of the parishioners, and noted that he had already celebrated several of the "triumphs" of this Interim time in his speech at the May 16 farewell luncheon that was given in his honour – "triumphs" such as the great cooperative spirit evidenced by (a) the Profile-Writing group, (b) the Profile ratification congregational meeting October 18, 2009, (c) the Canonical Committee, (d) the Parish Directory group, and more currently, (e) the Library committee, and (f) the emerging Altar Guild.

He then said that there were two matters he wished to mention to the Vestry, in its capacity as the administrative leadership of the parish: Triangling, and Stewardship.

Fr. Tony defined "Triangling" as follows: the condition where A offends B, then B tells C about the offence (but does not tell A). Eventually C completes the triangle by telling A that B was offended with A. A now "knows" that B was offended, but because the offence was never acknowledged between them, trust is destroyed (although superficially the relationship proceeds politely). Such is "Triangling."

Fr. Tony stressed that Triangling is a problem for all churches. This is because church members wish to be "Christian" and "nice," so they have difficulty delivering the "I don't like that!" message directly, and often let off steam in the company of sympathetic third parties. However he added that when he arrived in 2005, he found Triangling to be particularly virulent in St. Luke's. As Interim Incumbent, he deliberately fought against it, encouraging direct communication wherever he found Triangling, and himself modeling good and respectful communication, to the best of his ability. Fr. Tony said that he believes that the atmosphere in the parish has improved, but – because Triangling is a problem for any church any time – he urged the members of Vestry to be continually vigilant as the new Incumbency begins.

Having completed his informal remarks, Fr. Tony then read the following prepared statement:

Normally the duty of an Interim Incumbent is to keep things the way they are. Indeed, one of the reasons the leadership insisted to the Bishop that I be appointed was a fear that an Interim, who does not know us and love us, would come in and accidentally or deliberately turn us upside down. Interims are not *supposed* to do such things, but there are plenty of reports out there in the wider church of Interims who attempted considerable change in their short tenure, and St. Luke's certainly didn't want that.

So it is with some disquiet that I find myself coming to the end of this Interim time with at least two *huge* changes in our makeup: (1) we have a new Church Administrator in the office and (2) we have begun the hunt for a new organist and choir director. As for the first, I am *very* happy about Anne Martens, and think she is making an excellent contribution. For the second, I wish the organist selection committee well, and hope that as a result of their work the calibre of music in St. Luke's will be as high or higher than

ever before in the years to come. But these are changes that I hoped would not happen on my watch, and they did. We have done, and are doing the best we can with it.

I have absolutely no complaints about how the people of this parish have treated me. Everyone has been more than kind and supportive. Many say they will miss me when I go. Being liked (and I think I am – possibly even *loved*) is not hard to take, and I thank all the people of St. Luke's for their consistent kindness and affection.

The thing about a short-term position like this is that I step away before people really start to get tired and fed up with me. The honeymoon is still more or less underway.

If I were *Rector*, and were to stay for an indefinite period, I would have changed some things more than I have, and I would no doubt have started to annoy people.

In that vein, there is the one thing I believe I *must* speak about, specifically to a Vestry (if not to the parish as a whole), before I leave. You know that I have given leadership throughout the church in the matter of church finances. In fact my first sermon in St. Luke's was on Stewardship, in the context of Consecration Sunday.

Because I was an Interim, not a Rector, I could not and did not try to move St. Luke's onto what I believe to be a healthy Stewardship path. I don't know whether or not Fr. Paul will make this a priority, but I will take advantage of your good will and sound a slight note of warning before I leave. You will then be glad to see me go next week.

The classical Christian teaching about Stewardship – that an individual giving regularly to the church an amount of money that is calculated as a percentage of the amount God has given that person is the gold standard of Christian financial development – is not warmly received in St. Luke's. When I teach – as I have done throughout the Anglican Church – that every Christian is called to give to God's work *ten percent* of what God has given him or her, people start to squirm and get very uncomfortable.

Instead of promoting the "tithe," probably due to an irrational fear of seeking this sort of giving from people, St. Luke's has ended up giving the appearance of *constantly begging for money*. How often do we have to say "Donate to this, or buy that!" in this parish? We have bought organ pipes, and ballasts and baking and Bothwell Cheeses in order to generate funds, and we are about to head down a major begging road with repairs to the roof and the east window. When people come to church on the 27th to see Fr. Paul take his place, several parish leaders believe the best thing to do is hit them all up for giving and for PAR! We end up pressuring people more about money than we *ever* would, with one intensive tithing campaign per year.

Before your brain completely turns off, let me tempt you with some simple facts.

In 2005 the average household income for the City of Winnipeg, according to Statistics Canada, was \$64,533.00. One average household that tithes will thus donate one tenth of such income, or \$6,453 each year to the church. This is the same amount as a very

successful rummage sale, and involves a lot less work. One tithing household equals one rummage sale. Ten tithing households equals ten rummage sales. And these households will give this amount year after year, without fail.

Ten tithing households can maintain a priest *full time*, on *full salary*, at their average income. Can you imagine a rector whose pastoral care and wisdom and leadership is shared by only ten families? An additional ten tithing households can maintain an *organist*... full time. One who can devote himself or herself *completely* to building a top-notch choir, and to playing the organ at world-class standards, without having to squeeze music preparation in after a full day teaching or clerking or driving a truck.

Tithing is how the big successful evangelical churches do what they do. Their "members" – their core parish – tithe. Visitors and guests give what they can, but a comparatively small core pays the bills while the newcomers get used to participating. Then there is a deliberate policy to encourage newer members to move up to full participation and eventual tithing. The church is led by a large body of staff: several clergy of differing skills, plus full-time youth workers and musicians. Considerable money flows outward to worldwide missions. And the buildings are large, well lit and heated, with a healthy complement of administrative and custodial staff. This is all done with a core membership of less than a hundred families... who tithe.

Of course it is fun to say what *could* be done with that kind of money. It is, however, like pipe dreaming about what I might do were I to win a lottery! How does one actually persuade people to give at that level?

Nobody gives money to something that they don't believe in. They may give a loonie to a beggar just to make them go away, but to give substantially, they have to say to themselves, "This is truly important, and worth my sacrifice!"

So tithing never happens without some sort of increase in Christian faith. Do you believe this is really *God's* church? Do you believe that when you get to the Pearly Gates the first question will not be "How rich were you?" or "how many friends did you have?" or, like that smart bumper sticker some years ago, "The person who dies with the most toys... wins!" The question won't be "Did you buy the most toys!?"

No, if you, like me, believe that the first question you will be asked is, "what did you do to make My mission move forward at St. Luke's?" then the ground rules are entirely different. If we *truly* believe that St. Luke's is God's primary outpost in this world of pain and sorrow, we will know that our lives will be judged on the power and quality of the worship at St. Luke's, judged by the lives touched among our Tuesday Hospitality people, measured around the care and compassion extended to our brothers and sisters in Uganda – for under that banner what happens here at St. Luke's is the most important thing in heaven and on earth, and while God delights to let us keep 90% of what he has given us each day, God *expects* that the other ten will go towards this all important mission here in the parish of St. Luke.

Were I to be the permanent Rector here, I would feel obliged to call this congregation to become a group of people who tithe; and those who find ten percent an impossible Everest of giving, I would encourage them to move a step up towards it year by year; and those who have never before given to the church proportionately – that is, in proportion, or as a percent of what God has given them – I would encourage them to move from giving discretionary money to giving a percentage, even *one* percent.

And I would encourage you, the Vestry, to recognize that there are two false economies: fund-raising and building rentals. Fund-raisers such as sales are great for building fellowship and should never be discouraged. But it is not possible for fund-raisers to maintain a church like this. One rummage sale is months of work by tens, or even hundreds of people. One rummage sale – one *spectacular* rummage sale would net at most \$10,000. This parish with its current budget would need twenty five spectacular rummage sales each year to keep its door open. We would perish in the attempt.

Rentals are also a false economy. Think of the Fort Rouge Day Care. They use the building five days a week, or seventy percent of the time, for which they pay at most seven percent of the operating costs. The Day Care is a service we provide to the Fort Rouge neighbourhood, but it costs us almost as much to have them here as they pay us – possibly even more. Just think of it: There are forty people, big and little, in this building every day, turning on and off taps, using heat and light, wearing down floors and door hinges, and running electricity.

Attending to tenants also takes time and effort on the part of our Handyman, Church Administrator and Rector, and thus a proportion of the parish payroll costs must be added to the cost of keeping these tenants here. And think of the parish-building, congregation building, faith building programmes that we can *not* do because the building is being occupied by our tenants.

There is more joy in heaven over one sinner who becomes a believer and a tither than there is about a boatload of rentals or fundraisers.

Aren't you glad I'm leaving?

In all seriousness, this is said in love and affection to a parish which has taken a goodly chunk of my life, and it is said, not because I want to criticize or berate you, but because the well-being and Christian success of St. Luke's is what would please me more than anything else I can think of.

The Rev'd Canon Tony Harwood-Jones
Interim Incumbent (June 2008 – June 2010)