

Interim Incumbent's Preliminary Report to Vestry

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presented to Vestry, September 16, 2008

My first act as Interim Incumbent was to seek input from the parishioners in a process that Corporation has called *Did Well... Next Time....*. This was intended as a form of 'closure' for the many years in which Fr. Bob was Incumbent in the parish, and also it was to be the first step in moving forward. Unfortunately, despite many entreaties by both Corporation and myself, this project has not had a lot of response. There are currently 18 responses, 9 of them from the Vestry.

From what I can gather through informal feedback, many people thought I was looking for an evaluation of Fr. Bob's ministry. This is not so. The intention was to view the parish as a whole, and to list some of the things we accomplished as an *organization* during Fr. Bob's years among us.

This is not to say that Fr. Bob's contribution was unimportant. He had a profound impact on this parish. But if a Christian church depends entirely upon its ordained leadership, then you might as well close the doors when one Rector leaves, and re-open as an entirely different entity when a new one is hired. No one is planning to do that. Everyone I speak to has some impression of "St. Luke's" which they very much hope will continue into the term of its next Rector. Certain components of what makes St. Luke's itself date from long before Bob Brownlie, and some of them have emerged as a direct result of his personality, temperament, and skills. Our task is to identify those components of the parish which we celebrate and value and wish to carry forward with us into the next Incumbency; *and* to identify some other components – whether they originated with Fr. Bob or are of much longer standing – that we think should be changed or done better in the months and years ahead. Even with the low number of submissions in the *Did Well... Next Time...* process, some of these components can be clearly seen:

Did Well...

The Building

It may seem obvious, but it must be said: an enormously important feature of St. Luke's is its beautiful Heritage building. During Fr. Bob's Incumbency, Heritage status was obtained, and a number of repair and enhancement projects were completed – most notably the painting and re-flooring of Church House, and the more recent Accessibility projects (proscenium stage and elevator). 44% of the people who submitted responses said this was done well. Further, there is no doubt that Fr. Bob's contribution to this, in terms of vision and leadership, was huge. I think he would be particularly pleased with the responses that described how he linked art and architecture to the theological heart of Christianity.

Tuesday Hospitality

44% of respondents also made specific mention of our Tuesday outreach to the poor and the homeless. This almost certainly originated with Fr. Bob's own passion and concerns, and respondents were in no doubt whatever that Fr. Bob is the one who made this ministry happen. The question now remains: has St. Luke's as a *parish* bought into this ministry sufficiently to maintain it into the next Incumbency?

Liturgy and Music

Our Sunday liturgy certainly did not originate with Fr. Bob, although he had a profound influence upon it, along with Keith Tinsley and the choir. 39% of the respondents spoke of the liturgy as being something done well, of which the majority singled out the music in particular.

Warmth and Friendliness

Several people specifically mentioned Fr. Bob's habit of greeting people before the Sunday service. Marilyn Jackson calls it a "joyful greeting," and Randy Van Vliet points out that this was all-encompassing, "regardless of social or economic standing." This was done well, though few clergy will be capable of replicating Bob's "high five" greetings.

Christian Education

22% mentioned the teaching of adults as something done well – particularly the *Education for Ministry* programme. However an equal number felt that support for adult education was inconsistent or had fallen away, which they regretted, and wished to do better next time.

This also applied to children's Christian education, where respondents praised our Sunday School, but also wanted to see more follow-up after Confirmation.

Finally, a couple of things not frequently mentioned, but of interest...

Doreen Blackman and Susan Tinsley both mentioned our connections to other churches, both in the neighborhood and the parish in Scanterbury. Kris Watson mentioned the importance of coffee hour, fellowship dinners, art auctions and other events in which we get to know one another better. Barbara Fisher praised our "open door" policy of providing a baptism and a wedding venue for people who were not members of our congregation. This latter was balanced by Pat Holbrow who says that *next time* there should be a concerted effort to do follow-up with the families of the infants we baptize.

Next Time...

33% of respondents say we need to manage our organization better: to promote a common vision, to communicate better, and to have clear roles and responsibilities. Joanne Tapscott mentioned Fr. Bob's non-interfering leadership as both a *Did Well...* and a *Next Time...* During Fr. Bob's time it was wonderful how much independence was given to people to make their own contribution of time and talent the way they saw fit, but of course it sometimes made for scheduling collisions and bad feelings....

27% were concerned about Adult Education in one way or another – how former vitality has been allowed to lapse, or how there are insufficient opportunities.

22% spoke of needing more unity and greater goodwill between parishioners.

Other issues presented included the need to avoid volunteer burnout, to make volunteer opportunities more visible, and the general need for recruitment – of volunteers, of members of the choir, and simply of younger adults who can be among us as worshippers and participants. 10% spoke strongly about the need for increased clergy pastoral care (lay visitation, while acceptable, cannot in their mind be a full substitute for clergy visits to the sick and shut-in).

What happens next?

I can't see holding the *Did Well... Next Time...* process open any longer. We need to begin moving forward. I have put the existing submissions into a folder which anyone may choose to view (just ask). In that folder you can also see Fr. Bob's *own* reflections, which really are not much of a surprise: he is very happy about St. Luke's ministry to the poor and to the street people, and about the accessibility project. His main regrets have to do with broken relationships and the things that failed to unite us.

So... (and I see this as my central purpose in this Interim time) we now need to develop unity around a common vision.

1. Combining my own impressions with your comments in the *Did Well... Next Time...*, I will make a list of the characteristics and aspirations of St. Luke's that I think we can all subscribe to. At a congregational meeting, probably in early November, that list will then be discussed and prioritized by all members of the parish.
2. Next, we will nominate some people with writing skills to put together a printed "Profile" of the parish. The "Profile" will eventually become a booklet, for distribution throughout the wider church. It will describe our history, and our vision, but it must also be truthful about our flaws, so that clergy who might wish to come and work among us will have a genuine portrait of our parish, and properly assess whether they are able to offer us appropriate leadership.
3. Drafts of the booklet will be brought to Vestry for comment. Another congregational meeting will approve it in its final form before it goes out to the wider church. Archdeacon Fletcher Stewart will likely chair the final congregational meeting.
4. Notice will be given across Canada that we are seeking a new Incumbent, and inquiries will begin to come in to the Bishop. Inquirers will be given a copy of the Profile booklet (plus some questions to answer about themselves, if they choose to proceed with a formal application). The deadline for the submission of applications is usually six weeks after the formal notice has gone out.
5. After the deadline passes, and all known applications are in, the Bishop appoints an Advisory Committee, consisting of St. Luke's wardens, the Archdeacon, and two lay appointees from outside St. Luke's. It is this group that will review all applications and develop a short list of three to five promising candidates.
6. These candidates will be interviewed by a committee from St. Luke's. This committee has an official name: The Canonical Committee. It is set up according to the bylaws (the "Canons") of our diocese. It is convened by the Bishop and consists of the Churchwardens and the Lay Delegates to Synod.
7. In early 2009, long before there are any candidates to interview, our Annual General Meeting will determine who will hold those offices, and thus sit on the committee.
8. The interviewing process will happen either in the fall of 2009 or the winter months of early 2010. The chosen candidate may be able to join us by late Spring 2010, or by September of that year at the latest.

The Rev'd Canon Tony Harwood-Jones
Interim Incumbent