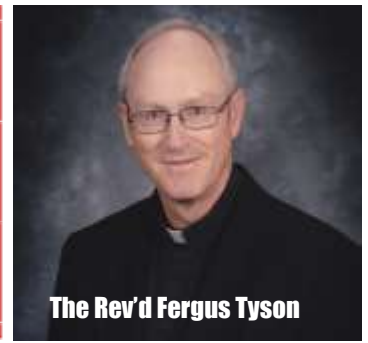


INCUMBENT'S REPORT, PART 2 ENDING

Following Jesus as a 'Hybrid Church'



The Rev'd Fergus Tyson

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishers. And he said to them, 'Follow me.' (Matthew 4:18-19a)

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, 'Follow me.' (Matthew 9:9a)

To another he said, 'Follow me.' But he said, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' 60But Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, follow me.' (Luke 9:59-60, Matthew 8:22)*

Jesus, looking at the rich young ruler, loved him and said, 'You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' (Mark 10:21)

Jesus said to Peter, 'Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.' (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.' Peter turned and saw John following them. When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, 'Lord, what about him?' Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!' (John 21:17b-22)

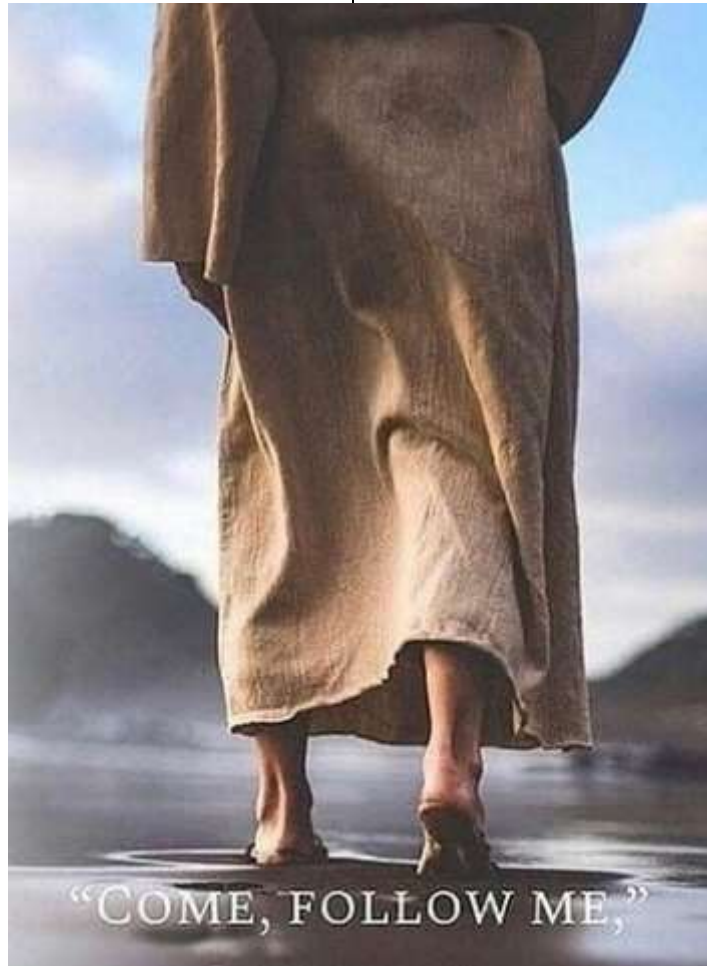
Every Synod, the Bishop gives a "Charge" to the Diocese, in which the Bishop shares words to encourage the Diocese to embrace all that God has for us. At every one of our Annual Meetings, I've tried to do the same

for us as a Parish with the second (non-statistical) part of my Annual Meeting Report.

I said in my Report last year that "2020 was year of adapting, of realizing that "the way we've always done it before" was, of necessity, not going to be the way we were going to do it now." Well, you don't need me to say that 2021 and 2022 and beyond are no different than that – that again, adaptability is key.

And there's a term that's being used a lot now – a term about being a "Hybrid Church." All kinds of books (a number of which I've got!) are appearing on this topic. One of the ones we're going to study as Parish Council this year is called *Becoming a Hybrid Church*, by Dave Daubert and Richard E. T. Jorgensen, Jr., which, I think, is the best of the lot – although there are some others that are also very good (honourable mention should go to Mark D. W. Edgington's *We Shall be Changed: Questions for the Post-*

Pandemic Church and Stephanie Spellers' *The Church Cracked Open: Disruption, Decline, and New Hope for the Beloved Community*). And the basic point of this book is that we need to take a "both-and" approach to each aspect of our life together: the Worship, the Discipleship, the Fellowship, and the Outreach. And our attitude needs to be not: "Well, if you're really committed, then you come in-person," and so we give only a kind of secondary effort to online experiences of Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship, or Outreach. That is not the way forward – not the way, according to the people who are writing these books and articles to help us reflect on the future of the Church; not the way that seems to be what, as we're reflecting on this as the larger Church, we're discerning to be the way forward that we should be going.





BECOMING A HYBRID CHURCH

Dave Daubert and
Richard E. T. Jorgensen, Jr

To be a Hybrid Church requires a change in our way of looking at doing things online. For example, we watched a video in our Adult Education Study recently (a video from the early 2,000's, so predating Zoom and even widespread use of Skype) in which a member of an Episcopal Parish said that one of the things that she thought was very important was the fellowship that we experience when we work together with others in the Parish in Outreach – and the way that she was talking about it added as understood the word “in-person”: It’s very important, the fellowship that we experience when we work together with others in the Parish in-person in Outreach.” Now she’s right about it being very important. But in 2022, you can experience this online. For example, you can work together in advocacy. There are two important points here. First, the full expression of being the Church must include the 4 components of Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship, and Outreach. It’s not a pick your favourite 3 out of 4! So, the person being interviewed in the Video was quite right to talk about

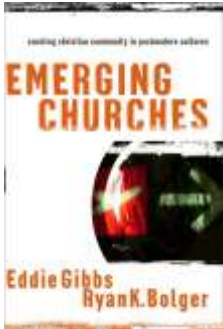
Each component (Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship, and Outreach) must be both present and actively engaged in to be a full expression of Church. And in 2022, each can be in-person or online.

the importance of the Outreach component. She was also right about a second point. She mentioned working together. If you’re going to say, “This is an online experience of one of the components of being the Church that you’re having,” for it to be genuine, it must involve you actively in it. So, for example, for our experience of online Worship to be a genuine experience of being the Church, we must not be passive - not be just like we’re watching a TV programme. We must be participating in it – sharing the Prayers and the Hymns, listening actively to Holy Scripture, memorizing the Sermon, after replaying it at least 10 times. (Well, okay, maybe not this last action!) Each component (Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship, and Outreach) must be both present and actively engaged in to be a full expression of Church. And in 2022, each can be in-person or online.



It’s actually just like what we used to say about “Fresh Expressions.” Some of you may remember that – it wasn’t that many years ago we were using that terminology. But in that case, we were talking about “fresh Expressions” in-person – stuff like “Messy Church.” People were saying, “Well, is this a real, bona fide expression of Church if it’s not on a Sunday morning? Can it be a full expression of being the

Church if it never includes that – if it’s always gathering on a Wednesday after school, for example?” And the answer was, “Yes – it can be a genuine expression of what it means to be Church.” But when we said this, we were still thinking of physical gatherings. The difference is that what we were saying then about physical gatherings that were not the way we were used to “doing Church”, we’re now saying about online gatherings. There was a lot of talk at the beginning of this Millennium of “Emerging Churches” - and it seems like this is what’s emerging. And there are incredible opportunities because of it. Just as one example in the Discipleship component of



being the Church, in one of our Adult Education Studies, we had one Session where we had Betty with us from Vancouver and then we had a couple who were joining us from Nigeria (where it was 3:30 in the morning)! And so you

had this incredible experience of folks from all over sharing this together. Well that’s something that normally as a Parish, I don’t have to tell you, we really wouldn’t get – unless somebody happened to be visit-

ing relatives, or something like that. We were experiencing the worldwide Church here in our Study – and it was pretty awesome!

So it can be a legitimate, real expression of Church online.

Now, I don't know where everything's going, and of course none of us does. But our task isn't to "figure it all out"! It's much simpler – and, in its way, more difficult. What our task is, is to follow Jesus.

I've been struck recently by the number of passages where Jesus says, "Follow me." A by no means exhaustive list is given at the beginning of this Incumbent's Message. In fact, 23 times in the Gospels, Jesus says he's calling us to follow him! So I think there's a message there! Certainly there's a message to me, but, I think, to all of us in these unprecedented times.

I'd like to reflect on this to end this month's Incumbent's Message.

We're "following" – we're on the way. We're not stopping, and deciding, "This is far enough. I'm not going any further; I'm not growing or learning any more." We haven't reached our destination yet; we're still journeying. We still have new places to go. We're following.

We follow, not "follow when circumstances are different." That was the balking follower: "Lord, I'll follow, but just let me do this or that first." (See Luke 9:59-60 and Matthew 8:22 above). We follow, not when circumstances are different, but here and now, right in the midst of this Pandemic, right here in 2022.

We follow, not "follow anywhere but this or that place." In other words, we follow, period. We don't put conditions on it and say, "No, I don't want to go there." This is what the Rich Young Ruler did. He said, "I'll follow you, but oh no, don't ask that of me. I'm not going to do that." (See Mark 10:21 above, and then verse 22.)

We follow, without comparing to others. That's what Peter did. (See John 21:17b-22 above.)

"The living Christ still has two hands, one to point the way, and the other held out to help us along."

We follow the One who's moving forward, and is with us every step of the way. So he's not saying, "Go. Here are the directions, and I'll meet you down the road somewhere." No, he's travelling with us

in the journey.

New Testament Scholar T. W. Manson wrote: "*The living Christ still has two hands, one to point the way, and the other held out to help us along.*" (in Thomas G. Long and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *A Chorus of Witnesses: Model Sermons for Today's Preacher*).

So, we don't know the way, but Our Lord does. We're called to be on the move with him, to follow him on the road.

I'm going to end with a couple of prayers. The first is actually the last verse of the Hymn "Will You Come and Follow Me" (Common Praise #430), which we sang most recently at our Feb. 6 Service:

*Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.* (Text: John L. Bell)

St. Richard of Chichester was even more succinct:
*Lord Jesus,
may we see you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly. Amen.*

What could be a more wonderful, incredible adventure than this? I consider it a sacred trust and the most joyous of privileges to share it together with you!

God bless you all, always.

Your Brother in Jesus,



[This is adapted from the end of Part 2 of Fergus' Incumbent's Report for our Annual Meeting of Parishioners on Jan. 30, 2022.]

