

**The celebration of new ministry for the Reverend Grant Rodgers**  
**at Christ the Redeemer**  
**Tuesday, November 8<sup>th</sup> 2016**

I have to admit that when I accepted the Bishop's invitation to preach this evening I hadn't realised that the Canucks were playing today. More to the point, I did not know it was also the date of the United States' election. My thought was that event took place on the first Tuesday of November; shows what I know. That said it seems a very appropriate evening to be in church to pray for the world as we find out within hours who will be the next President of our southern neighbour.

Once before I preached at an induction in the days when the Canucks used to get to the playoffs; tonight I'm glad to preach because it keeps me away from seeing the Canucks gets stuffed for the tenth game in a row, this time by the New York Rangers. But more about hockey in a moment. (*The Canucks did in fact win 5-2*)

Tonight we have come together for the Bishop to seek God's blessing on this new ministry with Grant as priest of this parish. It is a new beginning for the whole community and we hope and pray for a moment of grace.

My association with Christ the Redeemer goes back more than ten years. I know that you have been through some very challenging times in moving forwards to do the work of mission and ministry. No one in diocesan leadership underestimates the pain and difficulties you have faced.

At the same time as Paul suggests in the New Testament reading ... *since it is by God's mercy we are engaged in this ministry we do not lose heart*. And this celebration tonight presents a brand new opportunity to refocus, redevelop and work together to undertake the ministry to which you are all called.

Many of us here tonight (who do not belong to this parish) are here to support you the parish of Christ the Redeemer, to encourage you and pray for you as you progress together. We know there will be challenges ahead but we also hope and pray that you will enjoy ministering together in this locality.

One of the few things I know about Grant (and I envy him) is that he is a hockey player. I'm not sure how often he plays these days but I do know he has been a player in times past. Indeed the way the Canucks have been playing he can expect a call up any time soon. When he has played in the by-gone (and I trust he will forgive me for mentioning this) he was referred to as the *Fighting Father* so we know for sure that he has played since ordination.

This tells us something important about Grant: he is passionate in what he does, he isn't afraid to stare down difficult situations, and doesn't give up easily.

I am not suggesting it needs to be made clear, that he has come to fight with the people of Christ the Redeemer, but that he will fight to work with you to ensure that mission and ministry grows, develops and thrives in this place.

As our gospel reading tells us: *the harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few*; so part of prayer tonight is that people of this parish will use their gifts and encourage others from the local community, but not yet part of this church congregation, to come and use theirs too. So we are bidden to pray that God will send labourers into God's harvest. As It is also a reminder that all mission and ministry is done in God's strength and by the grace that God give us, not according to our determination. We need to remember that nothing will come of our work unless we pray and ask God to guide and direct our gifts and offerings.

This parish has great potential, set as it is amidst a thriving and growing community. The church is situated at the heart of where people live and work. It has the opportunity to be a beacon of light and welcome, as people make sense of their complex and complicated lives.

For the older I get (and I am getting older) the more I am convinced that people crave community, spirituality and common purpose and this is what Anglicans have to offer. We offer a tradition that includes liturgy, prayer, tradition, reason and encourages us all to grapple with complex life and church issues. Being Anglican isn't the faint of heart, you have to be serious, you have to be committed and you have to play your part. You also have to have a sense of humour and you have to love life; for that I think is what God intended in the first place.

The prophet Jeremiah reminds us that being born a human being isn't some random act, rather that God has intentions and purpose for us throughout our lives. The exciting part of that is that our *purpose* is only slowly revealed to us as we move through our lives. We can be sure that Grant is not *only a boy* as the text suggests, and he is being placed here by the Bishop to work with you all in achieving the work of ministry in this community.

When it comes to being created and formed, Isaiah also has some important words ... '*Do not be afraid for I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name. You are mine (Isaiah 43 v1)*'. Of course Grant with his name, has a head start when it comes to calling by God and especially when it comes to prayers. Have you ever noticed how often Grant gets a mention in the prayers of the church? Some sets of prayers in fact all start with reference to his name.

Remember Christ the Redeemer as you walk together on this road you do so with the prayers and support of the whole diocese. At times we may feel lonely in parish ministry but we are always part of the wider church, the diocese, and regularly we pray for and remember your needs and challenges as we know you will pray and remember ours.

A part of that support comes through the meeting of clergy on a monthly basis. That will happen for the first time tomorrow as Craig's merry band of pilgrims in Peace Arch will gather for Eucharist, lunch and conversation at Holy Trinity, White Rock. That support comes through the opportunity to be in touch with the Bishop and others at the Synod Office for advice, direction and support. It comes through the parishioners and Grant working together using their skills, their energy and their time to make ministry happen in this place.

In a few moments members of the community of Christ the Redeemer will come forward to present to Grant symbols of ministry. The bread and wine of the Eucharist, the Book of Alternative Services, a container of water for baptism, a copy of the Canons in case Grant needs to look something up, and a set of keys. The latter is not to ensure that Grant is the first person to unlock the door on Sunday morning and the last to lock up after worship, but to remind us of his presence in the community as the spiritual leader who works alongside, and with, the elected representatives who direct and govern the life and direction of this parish. The bread and wine which we celebrate together tonight reminds us of the centrality of Eucharist to all that we do as Anglicans, the place where our ministry begins, is sent out and returns Sunday by Sunday. The water of baptism is to remind us of the centrality of this initiation for all God's people into the life of Christ which again is where our ministry begins and is established.

This is both a grace filled and joyous moment. It is a new beginning, one that is full of expectation, promise and yes, a good deal of hard work. As we prepare to see Grant licensed by Bishop Melissa in a few moments, we ask God to send the Holy Spirit afresh on this community, its leaders and Grant himself, that working together, working in God's strength, working with the support and guidance of colleagues, diocesan leaders and others, this parish of Christ the Redeemer may recover its self-worth, develop its mission and ministry in the community and be that beacon of light amongst, for and with the Cloverdale community.

May God bless and guide you in all you do together for the common good, for one another to further and enhance the community here that bears and proclaims the name of Christ.

Amen