

2017 RECTOR'S REPORT

“There is no one way of being a priest.”
– *Former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams*

“There is no one way of being a priest.” Those were the first words in a book that Deacon Cuff gave me this past year to read called *On Being a Priest Today*. Those words immediately captured my interest, for when you are in a vocation such as mine, one can begin to second guess just how one does one's job (and indeed, just what that job is supposed to be). There is often a temptation to look around at other members of the clergy and measure ourselves accordingly – which never ends well! – for after all, *there is no one way of being a priest*. That is something that is taking me a lifetime to really learn. One thing I am infinitely grateful for is that I have spent the bulk of my journey learning how to do this “priest thing” with you, my beloved Christ Church parish.

And what a year this has been to reflect on my ministry among you! I loved 2017. Certainly for me it was one wave after another of refreshment, renewal and then revisioning our ministry together at Christ Church. It started out in January with a wonderfully refreshing sabbatical. I took my first ever on-my-own excursion to explore the wonders of the Galapagos Islands (check one off of my bucket list!), followed by a week in our Companion Diocese of Ecuador Littoral where I attended their Diocesan Convention and visited several parishes we had assisted after the earthquake there. In March I joined some of our parishioners, along with those of St. George's, Rumson, to make my second pilgrimage to Israel. But much of my time on sabbatical was used quietly at the Rectory: working on our Stewardship Program for the year, designing and putting together the chasuble for the Creation Season (also on my bucket list) and getting lots and lots of reading and reflection done. I came back feeling like a brand-new priest!

And yet I am not. This summer was the 20th anniversary of my call to Christ Church and my 27th year as a priest. Which has also given me a lot on which to reflect. The parish surprised me with a celebration in August, and I was particularly pleased to see donations made to the Father Mainer Fund to continue his ministry among the poorest of our poor. Those funds are quickly being depleted, and as they enable me to do my priestly ministry to the most needy, that Fund is at the top of my agenda for this new year. Thank you to all who contributed.

It is hard for me to believe that I have been in Shrewsbury this long (and perhaps for some of you, as well!) As I stand in the narthex of the church every Sunday greeting people, I sometimes look up at the two marble slabs on the wall and find it quite astonishing that I am moving up the ranks as one of the longest tenured rectors here. It doesn't seem quite possible. I still feel the same excitement as I did on that summer day when I walked up the driveway towards the Parish House for the first time. And believe it or not, I still have far too many ideas about what I would like for us as a community of faith.

Many new things are upon us: from the monthly Race Conversations to a new Covenant House facility being opened this month in Asbury Park, from the growing of our families with young children (Seeing is Believing) to the rebuilding of our Youth Program....it is, as one parishioner is fond of saying “all good”. It is all good.

What is it to be a priest? What is the job description and duties? How does one measure how one is doing and where one is going next? I'm not exactly sure, but I will let you know when I find out. What I *do* know is that it is a journey I do not make alone; I can only do so within the context of a community of faith. And I cannot imagine a better place to be. So enjoy this annual report – it is OUR annual report, reminding us of where we have been, and helping us to dream of where we would like to go next.

Peace,

Mother Lisa Mitchell+