

ST MARTIN'S-IN-THE-VELD
VESTRY 26/2/2023

RECTOR'S REPORT:

As we enter a period of fasting and penitence, on this first Sunday in Lent, it is appropriate that the three temptations of Jesus invite us to examine our own motivations for ministry and question just how attentive to God we are. My NIV Study Bible notes have this to say about Matt 4:1–11: “The significance of Jesus’ temptations, especially because they occurred at the outset of his public ministry, seems best understood in terms of the kind of Messiah he was to be:

- He would *not* accomplish his mission by using his supernatural power for his own needs (first temptation),
- by using his power to win a large following by miracles or magic (second temptation)
- or by compromising with Satan in idolatrous worship (third temptation).

Although Jesus was the Son of God, he defeated Satan by using a weapon that everyone has at their disposal: “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”.

This points us back to Israel’s wilderness experiences in Dt 6–8, from which Jesus quotes in his three responses to the devil’s temptations (see vv. 4,7,10). There Moses recalls how the Lord led the Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years “to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands” (Deut 8:2).

Here at the beginning of his ministry Jesus is subjected to a similar test and shows himself to be the true Israelite who lives “on every word that comes from the mouth of God”. We also, have come through a deeply testing time, not unlike the wilderness the Israelites travelled through, and Jesus was led into by the Holy Spirit, to be tempted and tested.

But we were not alone in this: when Jesus overcame temptations by clinging to God and God’s word, he provided a powerful example for all believers in their own times of testing. And because Jesus is tempted as Israel was and as believers continue to be, he is able to be our “merciful and faithful high priest”, and thus “able to help those who are being tempted”.

May we also, as individuals, and as a parish, not be tempted to make ourselves the focus of our ministry, nor seek the adulation of crowds, nor follow any of the many modern day idols available; but rather follow our merciful and faithful high priest in Jesus, and cling to God and His Word in all we do!

Jesus himself summarised the law, the Word of God, in two commandments:

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' [38] This is the first and greatest commandment. [39] And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' [40] All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments," He said. (Matthew 22:37-40).

That 1st Commandment, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind' sounds a lot like the 1st statement of our vision as a church:

1. "We Connect with God in Sanctuary".

At our recent annual Strategic Planning Day we came up with several goals to be addressed in this area:

1.1. One of the successes of our time in lockdown, was the way in which putting the services on Powerpoint has enabled us to experiment with liturgy.

Liturgy remains an important part of Anglicanism, and we would like to stay with Powerpoint and use other updated technology to enrich our services.

1.2. Another success of our time in lockdown has been the revival of the Prayer Circle (aka the 'Prayer Warriors') under the leadership of Melanie Glyn-Jones.

We would like to continue to be a parish where parishioner's needs are brought in prayer to the throne of Grace, and we can see prayers answered.

1.3. A core value of our parish over the years has been the practice of Contemplative Prayer, which has continued to enrich us under the leadership of Jo-anne Tatalias and +Brian.

This was further developed in last year's Lenten Theme: "The Deeply Formed Life", and will continue to be explored in this year's Lenten theme: "Seeking God: Finding Another Kind of Life with St. Ignatius and Dallas Willard".

Under new leadership in Michael Glensor we would like to see Contemplative Prayer reintroduced in quiet mornings once a quarter.

1.4. One of the key observations made by John Van Der Laar in his cutting-edge course on Church After Covid ("A New Church for a New World") is the fact that "Some churches grow wide, other grow deep. But you can't do both at the same time!" James Ernest, the vice-president and editor-in-chief at Eerdmans says that "What we're seeing is massive discipleship failure caused by massive catechesis failure". Clearly we need a new discipleship where we become intentional about finding ways to grow a people who are immersed in the mission and message of Jesus.

Our Lenten courses are a part of this process, and in the past we have successfully used Alpha as a means to this, but we would like to develop it further

in teachings series and specific courses on discipleship, taught by Paul Siaki and others.

1.5. Finally, we would like to plan one or more retreats for 2023, where groups of people in the parish are able to draw aside for a weekend outside of the parish to grow in depth.

The 2nd Commandment of Jesus, 'Love your neighbour as yourself' sounds a lot like the 2nd statement of our vision as a church:

2. "We Connect with One Another in Community".

Here too we recently came up with several goals to be addressed.

2.1. A feature of our past life as a church community has been it's gathering together in combined services, where we get to be with one another from different services and share our life together.

This has happened at big festivals, like Pentecost, and church celebrations, like St Martin's Family Day, and on occasions like the Passover Supper where we get to "Celebrate the Feasts" together, at least once a quarter.

2.2. We would like to reintroduce a previous feature of all our services which is the use of Name Tags to help identify one another at services.

2.3. Allied to this we would like to re-establish a Welcome Team at each service, update the current Welcomer's Brochure, which was recently redesigned, and stage events where we welcome newcomers and introduce them to different aspects of our life together.

2.4. Sharing food is always a good way to build community, whether over a Bring 'n Share meal after an event or service, or inviting one another into our homes.

2.5. As people return to Church services, and we draw new people into communion with us, we need to ensure our Pastoral Care is good. This has been revitalised over the last couple of years with Estelle Nobin running our Caring Portfolio, recently taken over by Claudia Jeevenantham, and ably assisted by Melanie Glyn-Jones with the Prayer Circle.

This is complemented by calls from parishioners to the parish office where needs are brought by Nataski to the weekly staff meeting. Please do help us to make Pastoral Care a priority by communicating needs to us.

2.6. One great success of last year was the Open Day, where many gathered over a variety of events in the Church grounds to entertain, educate, bless, and raise funds (nearly R30 000). We would like to build on this success by scheduling further open days and other community events.

2.7 Pre-Covid, Mark and the Ketley's ran several Marriage Preparation Courses on video, over a meal and/or refreshments. We would like to continue to do this by blessing families within our parish boundaries and beyond, with Marriage Preparation, Baptism, Confirmation, Parenting, and Marriage courses.

2.8 As we move out of the individualism of lockdown and separation from one another, we would like to encourage a system of volunteering again, to populate the many important tasks/ministries which are essential to our communal life: eg. Sides-persons, Choir, Parish Lay ministers, Readers etc.

2.9 To assist in this we would like to update our lists of processes which need to be followed for the smooth running of the parish.

The last commandment of Jesus to the disciples before he ascended to heaven, according to Matthew, was what I like to call the 3rd Commandment of Jesus, 'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you', which I think sounds a lot like the 3rd statement of our vision as a church:

3. We Connect with the World in Outreach.

3.1 Continue to build a Choir Practice every Wednesday which will attract people from outside our parish boundaries.

3.2 Join up with a multi-denominational minister's fraternal in our geographic area with the specific aim of sharing ministries and resources to meet the needs of our area.

3.3 Share the expertise that we have at St Martins with others less experienced in business and education to assist in upskilling (mentoring, coaching, teaching).

3.4 Share our resources with other Parishes in the Archdeaconry.

3.5 Within the Marketing portfolio explore opportunities for St Martin's-in-the-Veld to magnify its footprint in the surrounding area, and make the vast growing communities in Rosebank and our surrounding suburbs aware of how we would like to assist people with our resources, such as Sunday School, Services, Family-Life Courses, etc. We should use whatever means possible to expand this footprint such as community radio, magazines, newspapers, social media, and our website.

3.6 A key element of this goal will be to Update all signage on the main roads around St Martin's and within the St Martins Campus.

3.7 Finally, we wish to return our Evangelism to its position of strength in the past using tools such as Alpha, Mission Shaped Ministry, and The Jesus Shaped Life.

OTHER URGENT GOALS IDENTIFIED

- An alternative system of power now urgently needs to be installed in this current climate of loadshedding.
- Bathrooms need to be now urgently revamped
- Digital screens and additional speakers need to be installed.

Council and XCO should urgently allocate funds for these, and appeal to the parish to assist with donations.

VALUES/PRINCIPLES FOLLOWED TO ESTABLISH GOALS

1. We sought in all things to be a blessing to the Community.
2. We seek Excellence at the heart of all we do.
3. We seek depth rather than breadth in all we do (eg covering less teaching themes but repeating them comprehensively).
4. Volunteers are a key feature of all we do.
5. Marketing is a critical and central theme that runs through all three pillars.
6. XCO and Council to work on plans and actions to execute.

Essentially my report was written for me by Lucia Swartz, as it was she who summarized the goals we set at our strategic planning day and laid them out so well: I merely expanded on them a little! And how exciting they are, I must say, giving us much to do in the year ahead! However, I do have one last task to perform, and that is to bid farewell to Lucia as she has now retired from her work as head of Human Resources for SAB, and will be leaving for Cape Town once she has sold up and packed up her home, which means, sadly, that she will also be stepping down as Warden of St Martin's-in-the-Veld.

I have to say, Lucia, that it has been a great privilege having you as our Warden, and for the last few years, having you as Chairperson of both Council and XCO. Yours has been the voice of wisdom, calm and measured, on a wide variety of subjects over the last few years, and it has been your business-like approach to meetings that have kept us on track and on time in Council and XCO. Not only as a Councillor and Warden, but also as layminister and parishioner, you could be relied on to be always present, always participating, which is enormously encouraging on those rare days when everyone else seems to have absconded! You have always been fully present, which is a wonderful thing in today's transitory world! Thank You!

Mark Spyker