

St. Thomas's Episcopal Church  
Newark, DE  
Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost & Completion of Mutual Ministry between  
St. Thomas's Parish & the Reverend Paul W. Gennett, Jr. – October 29, 2017/Year A  
Ecclesiastes 3:1-7; Psalm 133; 1 Corinthians 3:4-11; Matthew 25:31-40  
The Reverend Paul W. Gennett, Jr.

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***“What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make an end is to make a beginning ...***

*May my words reveal the greater glory of God. AMEN*

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*“What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe ... I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.”*

I cannot recall how often this passage from First Corinthians has been part of my life, my serving, my teaching, and my preaching. I simply know it has been an essential part of my life, and I pray it has been evident through me many, many times in our life together. You see, for me it is the **hallmark and touchstone** for living the faith that Jesus gives us to live forward as **MOVERS in the Jesus Movement**. It is the **hallmark and touchstone** for lives shared in mutual ministry, together. It is the **hallmark and touchstone** that I pray that has been our mutual ministry these nine years at St. Thomas's.

I have been counting the days down from All Saints Day 2016. I have not been counting them with relish and anticipation on leaving St. Thomas's and ostensibly full-time ministry – well, SOME days, but not every day. I counted them in my journaling and prayers to engage my **intention and attention** to the gifts of God's presence and grace that each day provided. When I did that – and again, some days I did not, but not every day – I was indeed gifted and blessed by people and events along this way to this day. And for these gifts of your lives, shared with me these nine years, **I am grateful**.

I also received a gift of two other markers along this year that are the portions of the poem and the blessing framed my last Clergy Corner article shared on Friday. I have included them on the opposite side of the official church statement that bring completion to our mutual ministry. I include them because they speak to the essence of **what has been and what is yet to come for you and for me**.

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**“What we call the beginning is often the end, and to make an end is to make a beginning ... We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time.”** The portion of this poetry of T. S. Eliot's *Little Gidding* resonates in truth to our time shared in ministry together, and to the essence of our life and faith journey, together.

When we began our mutual ministry on Thanksgiving Day 2008, the fabric of St. Thomas's had already begun to change. The days of multiple full-time staff caring for the programs and activities were clearly not the way we could move forward responsibly as good stewards. Hard budgetary decisions were made to begin the credo "living within our means" that has continued with your Vestry servant leaders to this day. By being intentional and faithful to this credo, hard as it was and has been at times in our years, the \$50,000+ deficit we faced on my arriving is now a \$100,000+ surplus.

Other gifts emerged early on that have blessed this time and journey together. When the need to discern how we might continue our Episcopal Campus Ministry program leadership without a full-time staff person, we held meetings to share in the discerning with stakeholders in this important part and fabric of who we are ... and then came along **Cecily Sawyer Harmon** as one of those stakeholders. In process toward ordination as the first class of vocational deacons, Cecily brought her experience of working at the university, her skills as a social care counselor, and her vivacious spirit. After our second meeting, I leaned over to our Canon for Transitions Gary Rowe and whispered, "**Are we missing this Spirit gift in front of us?**" The rest is part of this journey, and to Cecily and those who support our campus ministry program, **I am grateful.**

Another gift was that of our diocese. When **The Grove** came available for purchase in early 2008, the parish was in the midst of your transitioning in the call process and not in a financially stable place to purchase this property. The Trustees of our diocese, with the encouragement of Bishop Wright, stepped into the breach and purchased the property on behalf of the future of St. Thomas's. Not long after my installation, I heard rumblings of our Trustees about when we intended to take on the loan for this property from them. Bishop Wright again stepped between them and us to give the needed grace of time and tending to our immediate needs spiritual and temporal. In 2012, we formed the **Forward in Faith** teams for discernment of how, or even IF, we could go forward on this project. We were blessed by the deep experience, counsel, and guidance of the Episcopal Church Foundation in this journey. In May 2014, we launched the Forward in Faith Capital Campaign to raise \$460,000 to purchase The Grove – and on the day, **over 70% of toward the goal** had been secured in pledges. On December, 2015, we took responsibility for the payment of the property from the Trustees, and in the Fall of 2016 The Grove was **fully and freely** owned by St. Thomas's Parish.

These are just two of many, many events of our mutual ministry and life we have shared. They speak to the essence of Ecclesiastes – "*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven ...*" Trusting in God's purpose and our participation in God's time to be present and faithful to God's calling. Our faithfulness emerges richly in the words of the psalmist, "*How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head ... For there the LORD ordained his blessing, life forevermore.*" "**What we call the beginning is often the end, and to make an end is to make a beginning ...**

So I come to the second gift, the blessing by John Donohue -- **“Awaken your spirit to adventure; hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk. Soon you will be home in a new rhythm, for your soul senses the world that awaits you.”** I confess that while I have “plans” for my days beyond November 1, I am always reminded that making MY incredibly brilliant plans gives God such delight and laughter! So when asked this question, which has been quite often, **“what are you going to do with yourself after you leave ministry”** I have slowly grown more comfortable in responding **“I don’t know for sure, just looking forward to see what emerges.”** Some of those things are in place for now, such as expanded number of people I share in spiritual direction, some retreats on the books, and of course THE LIST given to me by Marilyn of “honey-do chores.” However, for the most part, I am simply going to **wait ... watch ... listen ... and follow the Holy, even in those risky ways of new life.**

I see this as gift and challenge for the leaders and people of St. Thomas’s in your days ahead as well. Beginning Wednesday, All Saints Day, things that always were this way will begin to change for you. New rhythms of ministry to support one another through the “in-between times” ahead. New ideas for worship, service, outreach, and care for one another can be tried and tested. I certainly do not want to hear anyone saying those **seven last words of the church – Fr. Paul ALWAYS/NEVER did it that way!** Remember, we are Episcopalians, and we live in Delaware, so you can rest assured that I will hear of this ... and I will find you!! Take this time as the blessing it can and will be, together. Listen and live the words of Jesus we hear this day – *“Come, you that are blessed by my Father ... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me ... Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”* THIS is what a people of faith looks like when they are **MOVERS in the Jesus Movement.**

These nine years have been filled to overflowing with rich blessings to Marilyn and me. Rich blessings to know you and for you to know us ... to share in this marvelous and miraculous ministry as kingdom builders with God and Jesus Christ together ... to bless you and to be blessed by you.

To you, the people of St. Thomas’s, for these nine years shared of our lives and ministry, and the gift of what is yet to come for you and for me, **I am grateful.**

**AMEN**

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