

**ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA, NY**

The Rev. Fr. Arthur W. Ward Jr. + Rector

Eph. 4:11-16

***"Building on the Foundation"(part 2)***

**BRIEF REVIEW**

We continue with our series, *"Building on the Foundation."* Last Sunday, being the first Sunday of the new year and a new decade, we reflected a bit on our past – rejoicing in all the good God has done in and through St. Bartholomew's during the last decade. But we also begin to look at our future. Specifically, how we can grow in Christ both as individuals spiritually and as a body of believers. And we turned to the one chapter that provides the basis for such growth – Ephesians ch. 4. Now before we continue looking at Ephesians, I want to take just a few minutes to look back again at St. Bart's past and also a little bit of my past so that we can appreciate who God is calling us to be and what God is calling us to do.

**ANOTHER LOOK BACK**

St. Bart's was formed as a mission of Kenmore's Advent Episcopal Church in 1955. The post-war baby boom was at its height, as was the growth of the suburbs. In fact, the 1950's was considered the golden years of the Episcopal Church and a good number of Episcopal Churches were planted in Western New York during that decade. While St. Bart's grew, it wasn't until Fr. Amend came in 1965 that things really took off. Under his leadership, St. Bart's became a self-supporting parish. As the years went by, our parish became known for its Friday Night Bible Studies, strong Biblical preaching with an emphasis on Christ's Return, and traditional liturgical worship. While the rest of the diocese strayed from the Bible, St. Bart's did not.

Around the same time that the Lord was growing St. Bart's, I was being raised in Trinity Episcopal Church in Hamburg, NY. My parents were both believers and at the age of 10, I formally accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior. At the age of 12, I went through a Life in the Spirit Seminar at St. Peter's and St. Paul's in Hamburg. This was a seven week Bible Study that focused on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. During the sixth meeting, people prayed over me and I began to speak in tongues. In other words, I received a prayer language as described in 1 Cor. 14. As a result of this experience, I had a renewed sense of God's presence, power and love. I also was reading the Bible and though I didn't understand everything I read, my approach was simple. I put into practice what I did understand and I couldn't help but see how God's Word spoke to the concerns, needs and problems of mankind.

However, it wasn't until I entered the University of Buffalo (Chemical Engineering Program) and got involved with the nondenominational college ministry, Campus Crusade for Christ, that I began to consider ministry full-time. During my time at UB I went on three summer projects with Campus Crusade. A summer project consisted of working in a resort or national park with other Christian college students. During our spare time we would have Bible Studies and meetings, and share our faith with fellow

coworkers, other college students and tourists. It was after first summer project in Yellowstone National Park, that I began to contemplate what I really wanted to do with the rest of my life. Did I really want to be in a lab figuring out chemical formulas or did I want to let people know of about the life-changing power of Christ? I chose the latter.

After my first year at UB I also began attending New Covenant Tabernacle here in the Town of Tonawanda. During the 1980's, New Covenant was a vibrant and growing church and I was impressed by the contemporary worship, biblical preaching and openness to the work of the Holy Spirit. I ended up changing majors from Chemical Engineering to History. After graduating from UB, I enrolled in the M. Div. program of Regent University in Virginia Beach. As Divine Providence would have it, my advisor turned out to be an Anglican priest and I then began to think that maybe I should return to the Episcopal Church. I began attending the Episcopal Church of the Messiah in Chesapeake, VA, met with Bishop Bowman of our WNY Diocese, and looked to going into Episcopal orders. The Bishop wanted me to leave Regent right away and go to an Episcopal seminary, but at the time I had just started dating my wife, Kathleen and if I left not only would it put pressure on our developing relationship, I would leave without having any degree to show for two and a half years of graduate work. So I stayed one more year, got an MA in Pastoral Theology from Regent, got married, and then went to VA Seminary for two years to finish up my M. Div. degree. It was during my final year at seminary that Fr. Amend found out that there was a local seminarian who was to be ordained soon and he interviewed me and shortly afterwards offered me the position of curate at St. Bart's. However, had the curate before me, Fr. David Howell, not decided to leave one year before the completion of his three year contract, I would not have been able to come to St. Bart's.

Simply put, God's timing allowed me to become a part of the ministry of St. Bartholomew's. In fact, when I first went to seminary, I didn't think I would be able to come back to Western New York. But God had other plans. As a result, I was blessed to be able to learn and grow in the priesthood under the leadership of Fr. Amend. He prepared me for the call I received from our Wardens and Vestry to become St. Bartholomew's next rector at the beginning of 1999 after his retirement.

## **GOD'S PREPARATION**

As I look back I am thankful for the timeline the Lord used to prepare me for ministry here at St. Bartholomew's. My parent's instilled in me a strong faith exemplified by their own Christian character and life. Campus Crusade for Christ gave me an appreciation for evangelism and discipleship. New Covenant Tabernacle further opened me to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Regent University provided a strong Biblical foundation for understanding God's Word, pastoral ministry, and the importance of world missions. And Virginia Seminary helped me appreciate the Anglican Tradition

When I attended Regent University, I believed that a church must never fall into the trap of becoming a stagnant institution or social organization. It is a living organism. It is the Body of Christ. Our purpose is not just to worship but to grow in our relationship in Jesus and to make disciples of all the nations. I also believe in long tenured pastorates – in other words – a priest should be willing to set down some roots and work at helping a parish reach its full potential in Christ.

This is the background from which I minister. This is the basis for the vision I believe the Lord is giving us. It is not complicated, it is straightforward. The challenge is to know how to implement the vision and being willing to participate in its implementation. While we have in a big way have addressed our building needs, now is the time to also address our ministry needs as well.

Again, why are we here? Not just to worship the Lord but to build the Body of Christ. Recall last week we looked at how God has blessed St. Bart’s in many ways. The foundation has been laid and now we have an opportunity to reevaluate our ministry and look at ways to improve and become more effective witnesses for the Lord.

Recall that the mission statement of St. Bartholomew's is *"to proclaim the truth and love of the Lord Jesus Christ in word and deed by the power of the Holy Spirit and to the glory of God the Father,"* while the vision/purpose of the parish is *"to be a Christ-centered and Bible-believing Anglican Church committed to the Great Commission."* Now again where do we find the basis for such a mission and purpose in the Word of God? We find it in Ephesians chapter 4.

#### **THE CHURCH’S MISSION AND PURPOSE – Eph. 4**

If there is one chapter that sums the mission and purpose of the church it is this one. So let’s look again at **Ephesians 4, specifically at verses 11-16:**

***11And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,***

Who is the head of the Body of Christ? Jesus. And as the head He gives the gifts needed to lead and grow His Body. What are these gifts? They are given to individuals who are called to be the leaders of the church and for the most part they are the ordained members of the congregation. These are often called the five-fold ministry or office gifts. Let us briefly review each office:

**1) Apostle** – the original apostles were those who knew Jesus face to face and were personally called by Him. In the case of Paul, Jesus revealed Himself to him on his way to Damascus (Acts 9). However, the office of apostle continued in the early church. In the Greek, *an apostle* is literally one who is sent out on behalf of a higher authority. It also was used to refer to an admiral of a fleet. The work of an apostle is not only to be an official representative but includes establishing new works and overseeing them. So the office of apostle includes the gift of administration and oversight. The early bishops were viewed as the heirs to the apostles. Today, we look at our bishops in the same way, as they oversee the various parishes and clergy of the Church as we seek to build the Body of Christ, together.

**2) Prophet** - the office of prophet refers to those who are able to proclaiming God's Word to God's people as it relates to their current and sometimes future situation. It is one who communicates God's truth and righteousness to the church and to the world, confronting those who are in sin and encouraging those who are downcast.

**3) Evangelist** – the one who is commissioned to go out and preach the gospel to those who have not heard and in a way that people can understand and are led to make commitments to discipleship.

**4) Pastor and Teacher** – these are often understood as being linked together as a complimentary gifting, but they can also refer to individual ministries as well. The word, *pastor*, refers to a person who tends to the spiritual and sometimes temporal needs of the parish family. It is taken from the Greek for shepherd. A teacher in the biblical sense is one who is able to teach God's Word so that people understand it and are able to apply it to their daily lives.

All five of these leadership gifts should be evident in some capacity in a church. The problem is that for the longest time, churches have been relying on one person to do it all. That's not the way ministry is supposed to work! It can't be done by one person. Rather, the equipping of the saints is to be accomplished by a team of persons. Note the words, *"and He gave some to be..."* In our church we are blessed with five clergy with different gifts but that doesn't mean lay people can't be given similar gifts to supplement and compliment the ordained ministry and the five-fold ministry offices. Now notice the purpose of the five-fold ministry gifts.

### **THE PURPOSE OF THE FIVE-FOLD MINISTRY/OFFICE GIFTS**

*<sup>12</sup>for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; <sup>13</sup>until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*

What should be the goal of the leaders of the church - whether they be ordained or lay? *"To equip"* that means preparing and enabling others to engage in the work of service or ministry. To what end? *"To the building up of the body of Christ."* In other words, to reach our full potential on this earth for Jesus Christ. That, my friends, is how the mission of the Church is accomplished; when the people of God are not only equipped to do the work of ministry but are willing to do the work of ministry! Now what is the result of this equipping and service? We grow in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We become mature Christians and a mature Body of Christ.

Notice what also results in verses 14-16: *<sup>14</sup>As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; <sup>15</sup>but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

We will be grounded in the truth of Christ. We will not be susceptible to false teaching. We will also be growing in love for others, both in the Church and in the world. This is the purpose of the Body of Christ. This is what we are called to be. Let us pray...