

## **Fr. Daniel Trout Rector's Address, Annual Parish Meeting 2019**

Rev. Fathers in God, Parishioners and Friends of St. Luke Anglican Church:

I feel honored to stand before you again, this year as the rector of St. Luke: to be able to look back with you all in thankfulness for how Our Lord has blessed in 2019, and with hope that His guidance and grace will continue to abound in 2020. As St. Paul once wrote to the church in Philippi, “my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” As that promise was true for them, so may we claim it as our own.

I prayerfully believe that God has continued to sustain St. Luke and to help us make progress for many of the same reasons that we observed last year. Our ministries both within the church and outside of it have developed and multiplied, thanks to consistent participation and genuine interest in making our parish life meaningful and seeing the Gospel of Jesus Christ extended in our community. I credit parishioners both old and new alike—some of whom only joined St. Luke this year or have yet to join—for having the heart and doing the work to make this possible. It is encouraging to see that as our numbers keep growing, so does our work for God’s Kingdom. Evidence of this is still seen in ongoing programs and outreaches (catechesis and veteran’s dinners) but also in new efforts, such as the Ladies’ Bible Study, hosting the Augusta Prayer Breakfast, feeding the homeless at The Master’s Table, and participating in the civic organizations like Kiwanis, the DAR, and the Columbia County Choral Society. All have yielded greater visibility for St. Luke in the public sector and have facilitated or enhanced the activity around the parish. I think that seminar presented by Canon Bower in August both confirmed our desire for ministry and evangelism and inspired us to explore our possibilities even more.

Moreover, I have seen such joy and hope in many of us about just “being church” that many of our engagements have not even felt like work. Sometimes, we have just celebrated being an Anglican, all of which—I’m happy to say involved cooperation with All Saints’ in Aiken—including hosting our first annual Twelfth Night Christmas Party and Lenten Fish Fry, and also attending their Christmas Carol Sing and Potluck.

St. Luke has also made progress through much material donation and effort to enhance our physical space and improve both our sacred and practical implements. I think that 2019 might have been a record year for contributions, including multiple new liturgical instruments and ornaments, a new organ and a new piano, new vestments, paraments, and linens, a new window film for the chapel, new bows for the wreaths, and new furniture and utensils for the kitchen and the parish hall. We can also thank “Father Time” for a new HVAC unit and an augmented foundation. Much work has also been done to organize and to beautify the buildings and grounds both inside and out. The landscaping around us and in the back looks as good as it ever has and makes a much better first impression. Inside, the kitchen, the storage room, the sacristy and the library have been thoroughly cleaned and organized. I want to thank everyone who has generously donated his/her time, energy, money, and heart to show how much they love St. Luke and how much sincerely they want to see this parish develop.

Of course, 2019 was also not without loss. In January, we were saddened by the passing of long-time parishioner Marjorie Metz. Many of us, too, experienced personal loss. But, Our Lord Jesus gave comfort—and helped us to comfort one another—to survive all trials.

My vision for the new year? It remains mostly as I stated last year: that we cooperate with God's grace and will ever more perfectly and to make the most of our resources. I continue to believe, as does Archbishop Haverland and our peers in the diocese, that St. Luke is only beginning to realize its full potential. How can we improve, both in our identity and our mission? I think I can summarize it in three simple themes: *authenticity*, *unity*, and *hospitality*.

As Canon Bower recommended, *authenticity* to what we are—Anglican Catholics. We are unique among the church “brands”, so we must strive to mature and to project who we are: an ancient yet accessible expression of Christianity that is trustworthy, captivating, and profound.

We must work even harder at fellowshiping and serving together, to *unify* and to edify. We can respect old ways, but we must not be suspicious of or shy away from something new. We must remember that church is not a business, a club, or a pastime, but our communion in Jesus Christ for relationships, service, and spirituality. We are all but stewards, passing through this era of St. Luke's history, and we must leave this parish better than how we found it for new generations.

As I said last year, our *hospitality* toward young families and the youth must improve. We need to become more deliberate about inviting the younger generations to our church. This means networking with them to get them here, and making them feel welcome when they do. Or, if we cannot encourage them to come, then to visit them and show them that we are interested and that the Christian Church still has something valuable to share. As we will discuss in the budget, we need to invest in new programs (youth groups and outreaches) and new technology (social media, podcasts, etc.) to connect with those who might not ordinarily seek us out.

Finally, we must also improve our hospitality by employing greater benevolence to the needy. With the right budgeting and a spirit of compassion, I believe that we can better show the mercy of Christ by helping others as we would also wish to be helped.

Again, I thank all of you for your support through the last year, for being here today, and for your faith in Christ and in our Anglican Church. As your rector and pastor, I invite each of you in the coming year to be an even more prayerful and productive parishioner of St. Luke that, as St. Paul once wrote to the Philippians: “your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness...”

May God bless you all!

Fr. Daniel Trout