

2016 Thanksgiving Sonata from the Rector

20 years ago I first came to St. Chad's under the auspices of theological training. Little would I have thought then that 20 years afterwards I would be giving thanks here with this write-up. I can see that God has been distilling outpour of gratitude here from constant inter-weaving themes of refinement from crisis, turning danger into *opportunity*, transforming sadness into *joy*:



- When I was away from the parish between 1999 and 2001, the parish had been shrunk to become a member of the 4-parish Cluster. *That brought a 'wake-up call' for us to re-focus on mission, and we reclaimed an outward-looking posture.*
- Between 2002 and 2005, further demographic changes (with in-flux of new neighbors from Mainland-China in place of those from Hong Kong) posed challenge to our comfort-pews, as Sunday attendance continued to dwindle. *We started a Sunday Service in Chinese, which eventually got split into two Services in Mandarin and Cantonese.*
- As we re-shaped our posture in mission and ministry, we realized the need to work hard to be authentically open and welcoming to all, cross-culturally and inter-generationally - a steep learning curve for us. *Yet that started the years when we had baptisms of 3-4 (mainly adult candidates) every year. We just had our 41st candidate baptized since then.*
- Hardly before we took our breath from climbing that steep learning curve, the 2008/9 worldwide financial downturn gave us a hard blow with loss of about 20% of the capital in our Rectory Fund, the income from which funded our ministry. Before we could get back onto our feet, in 2013 we lost our 18 year-old Hall-user, whose donation also constituted our financial resource for ministry. *There we learnt God's faithfulness, as evidenced by our continued existence. We could only respond in gratitude!*
- Yet financial challenge was still stalking us, with Diocesan strategy of ending the 5-years' allowance of our drawing income from the Rectory Fund depleted below its inception value because of the 2008/9 financial downturn. *This time the crisis opened opportunity for us in 2014/5 to help our Archdeaconry neighborhood parishes to develop Chinese ministry. It also came timely to provide opportunity to nurture some of our younger and newer parishioners, exposing them to wider ministries beyond the parish.*

(P.T.O)

As I write this, I see God's same theme keeping on this year, which started with my being stranded in Ontario for 19 days due to my husband's stroke, and yet God provided help from our parishioner Gary to lead Services with our secretary Andrew's support, so that Sunday Services in different languages could be continued. How could I imagine working through 'long-distance leadership'? Likewise, when Roberta had a fall at Halifax lately, our young parishioners Victor and Joyce jumped in, with minimal prior notice, to provide music for the 11am Service. Of course we know from this two decades' journey - our Thanksgiving Sonata to God is meant to keep going here, no matter what, as it was in the past, is now and will be in future. Amen.



2016 感恩節牧者隨筆

時光飛逝，屈指一算，自從 1996 年我開始於神學受訓時期在本堂事奉，至今已二十年。際此感恩節期間，目睹上帝在這二十年來賜恩於本堂，總是化危機為機會，把憂傷轉為喜樂。

- 在我於 1999 至 2001 年暫別本堂期間，我們因人數下滑而決定與另外三個小友堂聯合成一組合教會，但上帝卻藉此敲起警鐘，叫我們重新專注於使命與事工。
- 在 2002 至 2005 年期間，由於從中國來的移民人口激增，參加英語堂崇拜的人數更少，我們便開始籌辦華語崇拜，此後更分為國、粵、英語三堂主日崇拜。
- 洋人教友學習全心全意歡迎不懂英語的華人與他們一起敬拜上帝，須突破文化、語言和思想的鴻溝，實非易事，但從此每年有三至四人受洗，上月受洗者是從這時期開始的第 41 位領洗新萄。
- 當我們仍努力於上述的各項學習之時，2008/9 年的國際金融海嘯把我們事工之財政來源之一的「出售牧宅基金」來一個重創。接著於 2013 年另一財政來源「禮堂使用者獻金」又因一個 18 年來長期使用者的離開又帶來另一擊。但上帝是信實的，我們的現存可見證池的供應無缺：我們豈能不感恩？
- 從 2014 年開始教區因我們經過了五年仍未能完全補充 2008/9 年金融海嘯所損失之 20% 基金本金而不允許我們繼續使用本金的收入，又引致另一財政危機。但上帝開路，讓我們因此有機會於 2014 及 2015 年擔當協助附近聖公會友堂發展中文事工的服務以獲得財政補貼而解決危機，更藉此讓我們較年輕和較新的教友可獲更多學習事奉的機會。

即使今年，上帝仍繼續給我這轉憂為樂的恩典：年初我因丈夫中風而滯留在安省，但獲得教友 Gary 牧師在秘書吳熾權協助下，所有主日崇拜可如常進行。最近琴師 Roberta 在哈理法斯跌倒受傷，又獲年青教友 Victor 及劉昕韻幫忙讓崇拜中不缺聖樂。回顧這 20 年的小史，我們可學會了我們向上帝的感恩之歌不可停：過去如此，現今也如此，將來亦如此。啊們。

李志敏