



February 2012 Newsletter

Message from Father Reid

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart; all else be nought to me, save that thou art – thou my best thought, by day or by night, waking or sleeping thy presence my light. Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word; I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord; thou my great Father; thine own may I be; thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee. High King of heaven, when victory is won, may I reach heaven's joys, bright heaven's sun! Heart of my heart, whatever befall, still be my vision, O Ruler of all. Hymn 488 1982 Hymnal

This hymn always gets to me; maybe it is the tune or maybe the words, or maybe because both work so well together. Once I hear or sing this hymn, it often takes me several days to stop saying over and over again “be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart...” and humming it to the beautiful medieval Irish tune known as *Slane*. The original tune was the setting for an Irish ballad that told the story of the hill of Slane which is located in Northwestern Ireland. Legend has it that in the mid to late fifth century Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, built a place of Christian worship on the hill and, even though there are only fragments of the building structures remaining, it is recognized as a testimony to St. Patrick's missionary vision. The words to this hymn were written at or close to 700 AD. It would not be farfetched for us to assume that the later words were tied together with this lilting tune as a remembrance of St. Patrick's vision for Christ.

In the 26th chapter of Acts, we read that Paul is placed on trial in front of King Agrippa. Paul shares that at the moment of his conversion on the road to Damascus, Jesus told Paul “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But get up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and testify to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you. I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” (Acts 26:15b – 18) From the moment of his conversion until his death, Paul was convicted by the vision for Christ. Paul understood the vision as God's heavenly purpose for everyone. That purpose was simple: to provide light for those who do not know God, to deliver them from Satan, to receive redemption of their sin, and to have an intimate relationship with HIM while on earth and a heavenly place with Him. As Paul continued with his defense to Agrippa, he shared that he “was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” (19)

When we compare our vision to St. Patrick's missionary vision and Paul's heavenly vision, accomplishing anything close to what they have attained seems almost insurmountable. And usually that thinking is rooted in our tendency to overcomplicate what it means to know God's vision for us. Paraphrasing Paul's words, we have to learn to NOT be disobedient, to NOT say that God's vision for and through you cannot be obtained.

I know these double negative statements may be confusing so think about it this way. When we know we are to do something or be someone, does that mean we automatically do that thing or be that person? No, even though we know what we are to do or be, we often miss the mark. So, if we are aware of what we should do and don't do it, we become aware of our disobedience. Welcome to the world known as free will – the opportunity to obey or disobey with full knowledge of the difference between the two. So, when Paul says that he has not been disobedient to the heavenly vision, he means that once he experienced Christ on the road to Damascus, he knew he could do nothing else but commit his life to God's purpose and follow where God led him.

The key to Paul's conversion (and to St. Patrick's) is his whole life became overmastered by our Lord - that is THE vision. Even though he struggled mightily (and shared those things openly) he constantly returned and surrendered his right to himself. In that sense he would err in thought, word or deed, acknowledge that he was in trouble and re-up his commitment. God's vision for you or me does not come with an instruction manual on what to do beyond our conversion. Vision is often confused with some list of detailed marching orders. God's vision is for the world to surrender their right to themselves in all matters and, upon our conversion, WE are to be witnesses to that vision. God's vision will be fulfilled through our commitment to be honest with ourselves, acknowledge our failings and "re-up" our desire and effort to have an intimate relationship with our Redeemer.

"Be Thou my vision" has such significance to me, because it is actually a prayer: a prayer for me to be Jesus's vision, instead of MY vision focusing on ME or something else; to pray that I not be disobedient to the Lord of my heart, knowing that HE has given me a choice (even though I know deep within my soul I have no choice); to pray that nothing else have meaning to me outside of HIM, instead of placing significance to the temporal things of life; to pray that my best thought, day or night, waking or sleeping is that I experience HIS presence, not the cares and concerns that take me away and bring me down. So, sing this hymn and/or pray these words if you are at a loss or confused or down. Let the vision of God become your vision and allow that vision to fulfill and complete you. Let us pray that God be our vision and we will find peace and understand the fulfillment of God's ultimate purpose: that we may understand the heavenly vision that God desires for us and have an intimate relationship with him. TCGB. Reid

[Announcements](#)

[Souper Sunday to benefit the St. Thomas Food Pantry and First Sunday Luncheon](#)

Sunday February 5 is SOUPER Sunday. Please bring an offering of supplies to replenish the Food Pantry. We specifically need in order of priority the following items: peanut butter, grits, boxed Macaroni & Cheese, dry beans and peas, large and small boxes of potatoes, spaghetti noodles and sauce, jelly and canned fruit.

Thanks to Rosa, Anne, and Frances for hosting the First Sunday Luncheon after worship. Please bring your sides and desserts. Fried Chicken and beverages will be provided.

[Wormhole News](#)

Come one come all to the **puppet show** on Sunday February 5th! We will then share what we have learned about Jesus the Miracle Worker on Celebration Sunday, February 12th. After that, we will explore the Good News Scrapbook, and the third module is called "Roadtrip – from Resurrection to Pentecost." Father Reid and Jennie Hamilton have developed a schedule through summer of this year. Please plan to bring your children to participate in this meaningful and fulfilling program. Invite their friends, we have plenty of room!

[Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper: February 22](#)

Join us for the pancake supper and the Mardi Gras parade beginning at 5:30 Tuesday February 22! The men of St. Thomas will provide pancakes and sausage. Decorations are provided by a committee of several women of St. Thomas. Word has it that there might be special entertainers in our midst, including the possible appearance of the "Cahaba Road Crooner" and someone known as "Sweet Lips". Come join us to ring in a Holy Lent.

[Ash Wednesday: February 23](#)

Please join us to begin Lent with the Ash Wednesday liturgy and the Imposition of Ashes. Services will be held at 12:00 Noon and 5:30 PM in the church.

[Cursillo Talk](#)

[IF I WAS THE TAIL OF A COMET, WHERE WOULD IT TAKE ME?](#)

The first few days of a new year always inspire me...to commit to a better lifestyle, take control of my spending, tidy up my house with the intention of keeping it that way, visiting those in need, etc., etc., etc. Well this year was no different. I decided to make a budget, drag out my money envelopes, and commit to staying on target each month. Needless to say, I have already dipped into one envelope marked "groceries" to use some cash for something that should be paid for from my "mad money" envelope, which, of course, is already empty!!! Resolutions just don't seem to work for me...ever!!!! Why? Because they are all about ME!

As Reid mentioned in last month's newsletter, Cursillo is a wonderful toolbox for helping us understand who and whose we are. The first talk that is given at each weekend centers around the determination of one's Ideal. An ideal is a combination of ideas, hopes and preferences, which inspire and motivate people. Our ideal represents our values...moving us toward something worthwhile. Our ideal gives life purpose and meaning, enthusiasm for our work, and should be high but also attainable.

Have you ever given thought to what your ideal is? Before I went to Cursillo I knew that I was searching for something more and realizing my ideal was my starting point. To discover my ideal I asked myself: "Where do

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my thoughts, my free time, and my money go? If they were a comet and I was the tail, where would the comet take me?" Is my ideal relevant to my Christian journey? Are my thoughts, free time, and money determined by my faith or by what I think I have to have?

As we enter a new year of opportunity to reassess and prioritize, the challenge for me is to decide if I want to work hard at keeping an impossible resolution that's all about me or stepping out in faith to determine my ideal in light of God's purpose and will for my life. It is a challenge for all of us...I am certain that considering our ideal will make a difference in our personal lives and the community of St. Thomas!

Participating in the Cursillo weekend enabled me to begin to focus more clearly on what guides my thoughts, time, and finances. That focus began to move from a "ME" oriented exercise to a spiritual commitment to a more faithful walk with God in the place that I find myself.

Where is your comet headed? A Cursillo experience could possibly provide that perspective and encouragement for you as it did for me. If you have any questions, please speak to Father Reid or the many members of St. Thomas who have attended Cursillo. Thank you, Magoo.

Rectory House Blessing

The Rectory House Blessing at 408 N. College St. is scheduled for Sunday February 12 at 4:30 in the afternoon. Light refreshments will be served and we will share in a Home Eucharist. Please park at the Stabler Clinic and old hospital site located on Hamilton and College Streets. Please keep the rectory driveway open for those being dropped off. All members of St. Thomas are welcome to participate in this Celebration of a new Home. So, join us for this joyous occasion!

Vestry News

The vestry began finalizing the 2012 budget, taking into account the current pledges. The vestry took into account those individuals and families who pledge but have not met their pledge in the past few years. Additionally, our budget is fully staffed for the first time in several years. As a result, even though we have not completed the budget process, it is apparent that the vestry will most likely be considering a budget deficit.

An observation was made that in all appearances things are going very well: our new rector is in place, church attendance and participation in activities are all increasing, and people seem to be pleased with the direction of St. Thomas under this new leadership. As we continue to move forward, our ministry opportunities will continue to grow. The reality for the vestry is that we need to communicate to you that even though everything seems to be going well, we want to make sure that we conduct the financial affairs of the church in a sound manner.

The vestry is discussing ways in which we can communicate with you about these financial issues in a meaningful manner. We want to be more upfront early on about our financial needs and how they correspond to our current level of giving. We will discuss this more after we have finalized our budget for this year. In the meantime, we want to encourage all members to do three things: 1) if you have made a pledge, keep your giving current and up to date, 2) if you haven't made a pledge, please consider doing so immediately and 3) pray about and consider increasing your financial commitment to the ministry of St. Thomas. Thank you.

Lenten Devotionals

Most of us consider taking something on or giving up something in order to observe a Holy Lent. The next thing we know Ash Wednesday is here and some of us are grasping for something meaningful to do or be. With this thought in mind, I want to plant on your hearts and in your minds a St. Thomas community opportunity that will also fulfill your Lenten commitment. All of you are invited to participate in reading a daily devotional titled **Provoking Thoughts** that was written by Russell Levenson. The book comes with Archbishop George L. Carey's endorsement.

We will gather on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 for a light supper and for discussion of the topics that are covered in the devotional from the previous week. Volunteers will be needed to provide the light suppers – they will consist of soups, salads and casseroles. The meals are not intended to be “feast” types, so please don't let this scare or keep you from joining us. I will provide a short teaching and we will be finished no later than 7:45. If you have children and would like for us to provide childcare, we would be happy to do so but please contact me right away. If you are not able to drive at night or need a ride, please don't let that stop you. We will coordinate picking you up and taking you home.

I know this is the first time in a long while that you have been asked to participate in a program outside of Sunday morning. I don't expect that we will have unanimous participation this first go around but I hope that you will seriously consider the opportunity for fellowship and to grow your relationship with God and the other members of the St. Thomas community. Seeds won't grow without fertile soil and care – the same goes for our souls! I pray that these gatherings will serve as a first opportunity for your spiritual growth in the mid-week. Finally, please let me know that you want me to order a book for you. The deadline for ordering books is Tuesday February 14. Magoo Hamilton is helping with the planning of all this. Thanks Magoo. TCGB Reid

February 2012 Worship Assistants

SUNDAY February 5, 2012

Greeter: Marge Conway
Acolytes: Team 1
Lay Readers: Jim and Mack
Altar Guild: Ramona, Mary, Judy and Alison
Ushers: Everett and Mike
Flower Guild: Joanne , Rosa, Mary Richardson and Anne Feathers



SUNDAY February 12, 2012

Greeter: Mamie Brown
Acolytes: Team 2
Lay Readers: Morgan and Julian
Altar Guild: Susan, Claudia and Cemira
Ushers: Herbert and Don
Flower Guild:

SUNDAY February 19, 2012

Greeter: Priscilla Davis
Acolytes: Team 3
Lay Readers: Dent and Steve
Altar Guild: Susan, Claudia and Cemira
Ushers: Bob and Harry
Flower Guild:

SUNDAY February 26, 2012

Greeter: Jan Ackerman
Acolytes: Team 1
Lay Readers: Bill and Cleve
Altar Guild: Ceil, Fleta, Jill and Marion
Ushers: Dent and Garry
Flower Guild: Lent No flowers or greenery

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Judy Messina.....	2
Laura Fuller.....	4
John Feathers.....	6
Roberta Smith.....	6
Frank Richard.....	7
Ethan Sadowski.....	14
Rebecca Reynolds.....	16
Elizabeth Anne McGowin.....	20
Kenny Parker.....	25
Brooks McGowin.....	27
Nikki Hartley.....	27



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Mr. and Mrs. Eric Anderson.....	12
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Glasscock.....	17