

A New Path for St. Martin's has Begun

Fifty years ago Bishop Cadigan sent Howard Park to this area to establish a mission church. Howard did not establish this mission on his own even though he was a key player in its birth and development; for he was surrounded by motivated and goal-oriented Episcopalians who wanted to see an Episcopal ethos in this area. That group was undoubtedly small but it was determined. Under the pastoral leadership of Howard Park that small but determined group of men and women built St. Martin of Tours Episcopal Church. The priest is called to provide pastoral leadership and oversight but never works alone. Howard Park did not build St. Martin's Church by himself, but rather with and through dedicated parishioners. From its humble beginnings St. Martin's grew three separate times into the facility we see today.

Twenty years ago Howard Park retired from his leadership role at St. Martin's Church. Howard knew it was time to step away from the work he had done here, work he had done in response to Bishop Cadigan, but most important the work he had done in obedience to the will of God. As sometimes happens in such circumstances, the memory of Howard Park seemed to eclipse the chartered course for St. Martin's Church. It was not Howard Park's fault, nor for that matter, the fault of the friends and parishioners he left behind; nonetheless, the course became foggy and the waters murky.

Larry Hooper's fate was sealed when he signed the pastoral agreement. The priest who follows on the heels of a founding pastor is almost always an unintentional interim rector. Whether Larry was exceptional, mediocre, or incompetent made no difference, for the memory of Howard eclipsed Larry's tenure at St. Martin's.

Eventually, Jon Hall became the rector. From what I have heard the first years of Jon's pastoral leadership went well; however, he did not possess the dynamic leadership qualities of Howard Park. Still, Jon brought his own unique gifts and talents with him and St. Martin's Church continued to grow. The later years of his pastoral leadership did not go as well as the beginning years.

On April 7th it was my honor to be the celebrant at Howard Park's Memorial Eucharist. Howard's tenure as rector of St. Martin's Church ended in 1998. Twenty years later he entered into eternal rest. I am firmly convinced that if Howard Park could speak to this congregation from his heavenly home, he would tell us that his era has finally ended and it is time to chart a new course for St. Martin's Church and its people.

What does it take to enable us to move forward with confidence, with minds and hearts open to strengthening courses that are working well and dare to thrust ourselves into new endeavors? Foundational love gives us that hope and allows us to trust "what is" as the jumping-off point toward working together for "what can be" For all of us at St. Martin's Church "what is" = **A** and "what can be" = **B**.

The most important step for us at this time is to accept **our** present state, not **the** present state, but rather, **our** present state at St. Martin's without judgment or criticism. Each of us must own personal accountability for our "present state". This is not an acknowledgement of guilt, as much as recognition that none of us should tenaciously clutch past memories of good or bad times in such a way that it interferes with us moving forward.

St. Martin's Church model for change is from **A** to **B**. **A** is where we are right now. It is a beginning place, a jumping off place. Each of us needs to join each other at **A**. This is one place where foundational love is so important because we need to value each other at our jumping off place. Foundational love means that we accept each other as each of us currently is without judgment or criticism. So, here we are at **A** and a new era for St. Martin's Church has begun.

We must acknowledge that we are at **A** but we cannot remain at this starting place. Anyone who locks self in **A** is incapable of thinking outside of the box. When we are incapable of thinking outside of the box we cannot get a clear idea of our preferred future state which is named – **B**. Our preferred future state, the new path for St. Martin's must be clearly and positively stated. For instance it is impossible to work effectively on a negative goal such as *reducing conflict*; rather those involved need to transform the problem into a desired outcome such as *increased cooperation*. **B** must be desired and valued. We also need to be open to the idea that the preferred future may change or unfold as we head toward **B**.

In order of us to move from **A** to **B** we have to employ Adaptive Leadership rather than Technical Leadership. In Technical Leadership someone with a set of expert skills takes over and makes the change. In Adaptive Leadership all of us participate by contributing ideas and working toward our goal. This means that all of us need to work together toward change. This is why it is so important that we accept and value each other. Why do all of us have to engage in this work? We are the people who have been impeded – each and every one of us has stumbled because we are all one as a church. We must be willing to set aside any past design or plan that could impede us and be open to learning new methods and ways. We need to acknowledge that we are the ones who have the problem and then work together to better our current state and future progress of our church.

Both my role and that of your future priest is to provide that pastoral leadership and encouragement in which your ideas can flourish and plans initiate.

May all of us listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and work together in harmony and love to continue the great work begun so many years ago.

Father Al Jewson