



THE UNCHANGING RHYTHM

by the Right Rev. Canon Alan Hawkins

As I reflect on the community of Church of Redeemer, the work beneath our hands, and the coming shifts on the horizon for this family and the vision of New Garden Park (NGP), a French proverb comes to mind: *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. "The more things change, the more they stay the same." In January of 2022, our church here in Greensboro North Carolina will be named a pro-cathedral of the Diocese of Christ Our Hope. While the language of this may perhaps feel confusing or even daunting, be assured that the aforementioned proverb rings true for this coming change. I do not deny that there is growth ahead of us on several fronts. But in many ways, this defining move is merely an expansion of the current and familiar form our community has always taken.

Over the past 13 years, I have watched Church of the Redeemer play an integral role in the Anglican conversation outside of our particular locality. We have always actively participated in the expansion of the Kingdom of God alongside our extended family the Anglican Church of North America. Through parish members (Glenn Wise, Jeff Whitworth and Trey Miller) serving on the Diocesan Council, and former Greenboro Fellows (Buddy Hocutt and Anne Spooner) serving as staff, we have participated in the formation of the Diocese of Christ our Hope. Additionally, our Next Generation team (Drew Hill, Melissa Lewkowitz and Cherie Weber) has served faithfully for several years connecting hundreds of youth from across various dioceses of the ACNA through Camp Booyah. I have also watched as Redeemer's pursuit of various ministries and service has naturally expanded into a role of hosting, teaching, and leading: the Abbey at New Garden Park houses Jenny Noyes and New Wineskins Global Mission Network; NGP and lead catechist Leah Wall have welcomed folks from all over the country for training in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd; our parish administrator Jessie Meriwether has formed a network of administrators to encourage communication, com-

munity, and a sharing of ideas; Father Benjamin Wall serves on the Diocesan Deanery Leadership Team; and farm director Lena Van Wyk has counseled and consulted with a number of individuals, groups, and churches on Creation Care.

Hospitality has always been a pivotal piece of Redeemer's DNA, and receiving the gift of NGP has seen this characteristic flourish and expand. Our facilities have hosted an Always Forward church planting event, Diocesan Synods, Deanery meetings, an ACNA Executive Committee meeting, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd trainings, a leadership gathering of the Arabic-speaking congregations of our diocese, and most recently, a Bishop's Consecration Service.

I hope this helps you to see that the work and service that will be required of Redeemer as a pro-cathedral for the Diocese of Christ our Hope is merely a continuation of the ways we've already been involved over the years of our life as a church family. But as the French proverb goes, though things are staying the same at a core level, there are ways that we will experience change! This change essentially means that while we have already been serving the diocese and the larger church, as a pro-cathedral, we will have an expanded vision. Our involvement is no longer optional or happenstance, but a commitment to greater service of the Diocese of Christ our Hope and the Anglican family beyond. We will find our congregation, leaders, and facilities more and more integrated in the events and the mission of the Diocese. We will experience some internal changes in titles and responsibilities of leaders, services, and work of our community. But no matter what new things arise in the days ahead, be assured by the knowledge that even this new growth is blooming from that same seed planted at the heart of Redeemer from the very beginning: the intentions, the mission, the vision, the hope and the heart of the church are simply finding greater fruition in this new iteration of our life together.

To become a Bishop or a pro-Cathedral sounds fancy and prestigious. It would seem to carry with it an heir of importance and elevation. In some ways, this is true. But not in the way that one might think. Power in the Kingdom of God does not come to those who are above others, holding authority and wealth and prestige over those beneath them. Power is found in the act of giving from the hands and heart of a servant. "But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20: 26-28). So as we take on the role and title of pro-cathedral, let us recognize that this mantle is a call to greater service and humility.

Recently, two separate vestries--one from Tennessee and one from Virginia--came to visit our church to hear about and experience the work being done at New Garden Park. Since their visit, these churches have stepped more fully into their own Kingdom-building callings. This is just one example of many opportunities we have had to serve churches, colleges, schools, and individuals, offering opportunity and inspiration towards the work of God through their own lives. The work that God has given Redeemer to do is being used to empower and inspire other work around the country, and this influence will only grow as we step into the role of pro-cathedral. This is a humbling reality, and comes with it a soberness and responsibility. But I hope it is

clear to you that we are not being called into anything for which we have not been prepared. The groundwork for the future of our community was laid long ago. We have traveled towards it one step at a time and this is just another step forward on that same path.

In this age of craziness and confusion, we hold fast to the belief that the Church--led well and operating in health and faithfulness--is a balm to the aching soul of our culture. What's the solution to our many problems? It can't be found in the political realm. It's building healthy congregations that model energy, vitality, and service. What we do now in our parish is bigger than what happens in our city or even state. There are mission stations in more than 40 other places in our diocese. Our work together is global. We are part of the big Church. I hope you are able to have an expansive vision of what God is involving you in by making you a part of this pro-cathedral in Greensboro, North Carolina. At the end of the day, we're just a simple church--one group of believers preaching the word, loving our people, reaching out to our neighbors, and enjoying communion: one part of the Body of Christ that can bring transformation to a hurting world. We are merely being asked to be faithful to the part of this work right in front of us. Even though becoming a pro-cathedral may seem a big move, all big moves are made up of the small, daily steps we take forward in ministry, and even in this new mission we are stepping into, this is a rhythm that is unchanging.

