

A lot of the parishioners of Grace Church have been around long enough, and volunteered enough, to have some sense of just how *complicated* church here is as an *institution*. If nothing else, you've experienced this in what it takes to do the annual Blessing of the Hounds...and the Farm Tour and Country Fair. And if you have ever served on the Vestry then you know this very well. And the Staff definitely know this. Being church together and our organizational life that supports that is usually more complicated than it can appear.

The Vestry meets monthly, except August, and includes 12 parishioners, plus myself. Grace has 19 committees which meet with different frequencies, and 6 task force groups which mostly meet regularly. We have 7 Coffee Hour teams. We have 1 hands-on outreach ministry that operates out of the parish hall and 1 that operates off-site, plus another 21 ministries in the community that we have financial relationships with. We have 5 Staff members and we have monthly staff meetings. The budget is reviewed by the Treasurer, Office Administrator, and Vestry monthly. We have an annual audit, an annual stewardship campaign, and an Annual Parish Meeting. We have a lot of policies, for example: safety and security, misconduct prevention, alcohol at church, emergency assistance, the cemetery, the use of the parish hall, weddings, staff supervision, the limits of authority for expenditures, contract administration, and Vestry nominations. We have bylaws and are accountable to both the Diocesan and Episcopal Church canons. We have a computer system for keeping track of membership information and finances and we use a lot of other computer software. We keep paper records of church services. There are procedures for the Altar Guild, acolytes, and chalcists. And we continue develop more experience in operating and troubleshooting all the wifi, livestreaming, audio, and video systems we have. We keep file cabinets of musical resources for the choir and we have continuously growing Sunday School resources for our children. And you have a Rector—who is yet another complication :) and who tries to keep up with all of the other complications, so that it doesn't seem quite so complicated!

The Church has long been *a very complicated institutional entity*...that necessarily functions within the realm of *practical details*...that are relevant to our existing and carrying out our mission. When you first encounter a church you don't encounter all this. In fact, you can have a sustained relationship with Church and never encounter but only a little bit of all the complexity. But still, we are all aware that it takes...*a community of people...doing many different things*...to be a church.

Yet, it is important in this Easter season, that I also say something more about Church. Yes, all the organizational details of church are necessary for a community of people who want their community to exist through time and cross over from generation to generation. *But none of this would have ever happened in the first place...if Christ had not been raised from the dead...and if the Holy Spirit had not been given to the followers of Christ*. And so we live in the midst of a great *paradox*, you might say, of the Church as very much a *worldly* institution...that does all kinds of necessary and helpful things...*whose very existence as an institutionalized community...depends on a very otherworldly source and center*.

And the one thing we do together that especially bids us to remember this...is our *worship together...our prayers...[our singing]*. This is where *the otherworldly...mingles...with the worldly*. And then we are sent out into the world...with an otherworldly mission...to “go in peace...to love...and serve...the Lord”.

We are never very far from the disciple Thomas...and, really, all the first disciples...who were *jolted* out of all their *ordinary assumptions about reality*...by the resurrection and tangible appearance of *our beloved Jesus*. And, this encounter was paralleled by the gift of the *Holy Spirit*, empowering the Church to speak Christ's word of peace and forgiveness from God...and to attend to the worldly needs of each other and anyone suffering anywhere.

So there is the strange sense that, in the Christian experience...it is this *otherworldly* source and center...which makes us *worldly*...*but in a different way*...and also keeps *calling us back to the otherworldly*...that is the *hope* of the worldly. It is this *otherworldly* event that follows us...and has sustained the Church through thick and thin. And it has the power...to remind the Church that we are also...*more than an organization*.