



ST. GEORGE'S

ANGLICAN CHURCH

The Oldest Church with the Youngest Ideas

Thanksgiving 2017

Dear Friends,

The first Thanksgiving ceremony in North America was led by Sir Martin Frobisher in 1578. This date and accreditation can be deceptive though. Indigenous people had long celebrated a ceremony of thanksgiving for the harvest. And Christian settlers were also drawing on a long religious history which calls faithful people to offer "the first fruits" of the harvest back to God, trusting that in our grateful offering we will find ourselves more fully blessed. As we celebrate our 225th Anniversary at St. George's, it is interesting to note that a national day of Thanksgiving had been established in the United States in 1789, just three years before St. George's birth year of 1792. We can imagine that our original St. George's congregation -- many who were refugees from the War of Independence in the US -- might have been influenced by the growing tradition of Thanksgiving in their home country.

What Sir Martin, our Indigenous brothers and sisters, our religious ancestors, and our St. George's founders all had in common was a sense of the precariousness of their lives and therefore a profound understanding of their dependence on God. Sir Martin and his crew feasted on salted beef and mushy peas, astounded at their good fortune to have passed safely across the treacherous seas of the Atlantic. Our original St. George's congregation was comprised of people who found themselves uprooted from their homes, trying to adjust to a new and unfamiliar land. It became of central importance to gather together in one another's homes around the stories, the prayers, and the traditions which assured them of God's loving presence with them every step of the way.

As I write this, reports of hurricanes and wildfires and earthquakes, the threat of nuclear war, newly legitimized dynamics of racism and ongoing prejudice against refugees and immigrants lead the news on a daily basis. It seems strange and profoundly fortuitous to live in a part of the world where the climate is mild and where we can practice our faith and proclaim our beliefs freely and in peace. I am also very much aware of the many vulnerable circumstances in which our church's families may find themselves -- through illness or injury, breakdown of relationships or financial hardship (to name a few examples).

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We may coast along in the comfort of our sheltered lives, but in truth, our lives are as small and fragile now as they were for all of our ancestors. It is only in nurturing a constant and growing sense of God's loving presence, intentionally saying "Thank You" for God's blessings and learning to be generous in sharing those blessings with others, that we find our footing and claim the fullness of God's life – in whichever circumstances we may find ourselves.

This is what it is to be rich. It is not about how much money is in our bank accounts. It is not even about being in perfect health. To be rich is to have eyes to see God's presence and provision working through every nook and cranny of our lives. To be rich is to know that we are capable of sharing God's presence and provision – love and blessing – with others. I pray that all of you find you and your loved ones are rich this 2017 Harvest Thanksgiving. I pray that the peace and prosperity of our lives may, through our church of St. George's, be a means by which God's peace and prosperity is shared generously and abundantly.

Yours in Christ,

The Reverend Canon Martha Tatarnic.