Fr. Dale’s Tidbits,

This has been a year like no other. The Washington Post recently ran an article asking people to share a word or phrase to describe 2020. Here are a few of responses; fallow, surreal, relentless, chaotic, exhausting, broken dreams, stifling, a year of missing, ugh, and lost. I bet we all could add to the list, some printable, some not. I can think of an example for each of these description in the limited and struggling day to day life at St. Andrew’s. But there has also be countless blessings. Our outreach ministries have been able to continue in different and creative ways feeding people and their pets and assisting with transportation needs through the Roswell Transit Authority.

As I thought about a description for this past year, challenging came to mind. Public, church, and family life has been challenging constantly weighing needs over wants. Diocesan meetings have doubled, if not tripled due to the availably of virtual meetings.

Still, I ponder upon the word “fallow” from the Washington Post’s list. The Message translation of the Bible uses the word “fallow” in 1 Corinthians 14:13-17:

If I pray in tongues, my spirit prays but my mind lies **fallow**, and all that intelligence is wasted. So, what’s the solution? The answer is simple enough. Do both. I should be spiritually free and expressive as I pray, but I should also be thoughtful and mindful as I pray. I should sing with my spirit and sing with my mind. If you give a blessing using your private prayer language, which no one else understands, how can some outsider who has just shown up and has no idea what’s going on know when to say “Amen”? Your blessing might be beautiful…

Other translations use “unfruitful” or “unproductive”. The heart of “fallow” is not about being unfruitful or unproductive, it is about tilling the soil, restoring its fertility, and clearing the weeds hindering God’s yield for a new season.

A new season, I pray, as we enter 2021, the signs of hope as vaccines reach the public and individuals accept the responsibilities of safe practices, by making wise decisions, with good judgement and a never-failing care for each other will illuminate the fresh furrow ground guiding the Church/church under the bright light of Christ.

Bishop Hunn has established guidelines and protocols for parishes, unmistakably recommending suspension of public worship or gatherings for parishes in counties with an above 5%+ Positive Test Rate and mandatory suspension for counties experiencing a 10%+ Positive Test Rate. As of this writing, Chaves County is experiencing 13.1% Positive Test Rate, down from 21.1% a week ago.

At December’s Vestry meeting discussion regarding options available in considering an Annual Parish Meeting in January is clearly questionable. Bishop Hunn recently informed clergy the DRG Canons state Annual Parish Meetings must occur “annually”. Therefore, parishes may delay actions needful of a quorum. Considering, much of what takes place at the Annual Parish Meeting is fellowship and informational, reports and can be distributed through various means (hard copy, email, website, etc.).

Taking into consideration several members do not have access or reliable access and/or skill for electronic meetings and voting abilities, in addition to the vulnerability of our membership makes a rightful voting process questionable. Consequently, the vestry voted to suspend or delay the Annual Parish Meeting (normally held in January) until a time when we can gather in person/Phase III. As time moves forward, your vestry will be updated as to Positive Test Rates, and in hope that in person worship and/or gatherings may resume. In the meantime, the Vestry may explore other viable processes along with diocesan recommendations and alternatives.

I give thanks to God for the many safety measures at St. Andrew’s which has contributed to averting the spread of Covid-19 among our community. I also give thanks for the leadership of our Bishop and your vestry for the same.

God’s blessings of a peaceful and safe 2021.

Fr. Dale+