

# The Vintage Voice

Serving The Church Pension Fund's Family of Beneficiaries

■ April 2003

## Reflections on Retirement

*The Reverend Canon George I. Chassey*

I begin this on Maundy Thursday, 2002, the thirteenth year of my retirement, the eighty-first year of my birth, and the forty-second year of my ordination as a priest. No doubt it will be well past the celebration of the Easter event before it is finished. This is due to the commitments I have made to various churches, Episcopal and Roman Catholic, as a stewardship/financial consultant, and to a variety of committees in the diocese. I also serve as chaplain for the 9th Air Force Association and for the 354th Fighter Group Association, which has kept me in touch with my World War II comrades. Soon after Easter, Mary and I will be in Hawaii to visit our granddaughter, her husband, and our great-grandson. Our granddaughter's husband is in the Air Force, serving as a meteorologist. He is stationed at Hickam Field, Honolulu.

To give you some idea of what my retirement is like, I am continuing this essay three days before All Saints. Much has transpired since I began this during Holy Week. Retirement for me has been a continuing involvement in the life of the church, though at a different level from when I was the Executive for the Bishop. In retirement, one takes on a different role; at least that is my experience. One sees the world and the church through a different lens. One is detached; one is part of the world in a different way. There is a freedom that was not present in active ministry. Preaching takes on a broader dimension than when one stood in the pulpit as the representative of the diocese. As God brings one into the nitty-gritty of life, the Gospel is seen in a different light, perhaps more clearly, with a deeply penetrating message that was not heard previously.

Of course, in the midst of this "retirement freedom," there is the concrete fact that one is not getting any younger. That marvelous phrase from the General Thanksgiving, read at the Daily Office takes on a greater meaning: ". . . we bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace and for the hope of glory."

Once again, time has moved on; it is now the second week of Advent. Since I last worked on this discourse, our granddaughter in Honolulu has given birth to our second great-grandson, Nathan Alan Fjeld. Regrettably, this will be the only grandchild or great-grandchild I have not

baptized. Although the parents wanted to wait until I could be there, I suggested it was important that it be done during Christmas when the grandparents would be with them.

Aging brings health problems. Mary suffered from shingles for two months this past summer. We are plagued with the usual minor infirmities of the aging process, yet on the whole, we are blessed with good health for our age. Shortly after Christmas, we will take a Caribbean holiday cruise, celebrating our sixtieth wedding anniversary. Leaving on the Grand Princess from Port Everglades, Florida, we will stop at the Grand Cayman Islands, Montego Bay, and Cozumel Island, off the Yucatan Peninsula.

For Mary and me, retirement has been a new path on the journey with God that has permitted us to explore new possibilities of ministry, or at least to see existing ministries in a new light. For Mary, this has been as a volunteer at Providence Hospital, operated by the Sisters of Charity, a Roman Catholic order. She is also active in the chapter of the Daughters of the King here at Still Hopes, the Episcopal Retirement Community where we have a small cottage.

Retirement is not the end of the line. It is the beginning of a new adventure. Where it will lead we know not, except that all will be gathered unto the Father at a time known only to the Creator. Those on the retirement journey can find strength in the words of that marvelous prayer found on page 489 of the *Book of Common Prayer*:

“O God, whose days are without end, and whose mercies cannot be numbered; Make us, we beseech thee, deeply sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of life; and let thy Holy Spirit lead us in holiness and righteousness all our days; that, when we shall have served thee in our generation, we may be gathered unto our fathers, having the testimony of a good conscience; in the communion of the Catholic Church; in the confidence of a certain faith; in the comfort of a reasonable, religious, and holy hope; in favor with thee our God; and in perfect charity with the world. All which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*”



Retired Canon Administrator of the Diocese of Upper South Carolina, George Chassey and his wife, Mary, live in a cottage at the South Carolina Episcopal Home at Still Hopes, West Columbia. Canon Chassey retired in September 1989.