

OPENING:

In 1879, archaeologists found, in modern-day Iraq, in what *was* the ancient city of Babylon, a clay cylinder from the 6th century BCE.

This treasure became known as the “Cyrus Cylinder” and it’s important for us because it confirms the story from our Old Testament Lesson, the 1st chapter of the Book of Ezra: how the King of Persia, Cyrus the Great, had this vision of repatriating the Israelites from captivity in Babylon back to Jerusalem, where they could worship Yahweh freely and rebuild the Temple.¹

In 2026, your Rector found, in the archives of St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church, the “vision” of the late Brad Rundlett, dated the Year of our Lord 1994.

That **vision** described, in about 1300 words, what he hoped St. Timothy’s would become in the decades to come...

more exactly, he described what he felt like God was calling the entire community of St. Timothy’s to become in the decades ahead.

You can find the “Cyrus Cylinder” in the British Museum, and on the front of your bulletin, written in Akkadian cuneiform.

You can find the full text of “Brad’s Vision,” written in American English, in the **WORD newsletter** that went out on the first of this month.²

You also should have received a **Stewardship letter** in the mail this week with parts of the Vision quoted therein.

More importantly, you can find the evidence of that Vision **here**, written in our hearts, written into the very life of this parish.

It is in this building and on this campus,

it is here on Sunday mornings, it is here on Saturday nights,

it is in our Outreach to the greater community and throughout the world,

it’s who we are as a Church and as God’s people.

It is an approximation, I firmly believe, of God’s vision and dream for this world.

A vision of a multilingual, dynamic, welcoming congregation that cares deeply about its community.

¹ Coogan, Michael David. 2013. *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 402-403,

² [The-Word-October-2026.pdf](#)

A parish that loves God and its neighbor, and that seeks to know both through worship, prayer and fellowship.

A church... “rooted in Herndon”, ready “to rise up and build” “for another 150 years,” “welcoming all,” “one together,” “broken open,” “embracing and growing in God’s love,” “living, loving, giving” AND “saying Yes to its Mission.”

If you have not caught on, that last paragraph was a partial list of our Stewardship campaigns over the last 15 years or so. They are the Vision(s) of St. Timothy’s during that time and they are displayed in **graphic form** on the poster in the Narthex.

EZRA:

I will forgive you if you have forgotten many of them.

I have forgotten some of them and I have led the last 5.

There is one, though, that I absolutely remember, my first, from the Fall of 2022: “St. Timothy’s is Back”... pithy, short and to the point, not as descriptive as Brad’s... but it did the job in that post-Covid, post-‘Time of Troubles’ moment.

In the Book of Ezra, the Israelites (remember them?) were also “BACK.”

This moment from our Old Testament lesson is the defining moment, alongside the Exodus, in Biblical history: when, after decades in exile in a foreign land, the Jewish people were allowed to return to Jerusalem, the “city of peace.”

The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah (**remember Nehemiah?**) chart that process of rebuilding, and return. Nehemiah, last year’s Stewardship focus, concentrated on the rebuilding of the walls, rallying a community to “Rise up and build” in the ruins of their homeland.

Ezra (this year’s focus) was a scribe, a religious official, and he concentrated on reestablishing worship with the study of the Torah and re-understanding the Israelites’ identity as God’s people.

In other words, Ezra focused on the spiritual needs of the people, whereas Nehemiah focused on the logistical ones.

They each had a vision for what life in Jerusalem would become.

Those visions were informed by the past, specifically by the Law of Moses and how God had revealed Godself through history, and it was informed by the new situation on the ground, by new geopolitical realities unique to the present context

Does that sound familiar?

Might we be able to continue to learn from our spiritual ancestors and their journey

through tumultuous times?

VISION:

Back to 1994, to the then new rector for this Parish... the 18th, who arrived after the long and successful pastorate of the Reverend Doctor Ralph Bayfield, the 17th rector in our 158-year history.

Father Brad made the (rather bold) move of setting forth his vision so early in his tenure, and in writing.

You might remember that vision vividly, or more likely, you have no recollection of it all. That's okay.

That's okay, because in the Bible and (specifically) in the Book of Ezra, things get repeated all the time. Things get repeated because we are a stiff-necked, hard-headed people that need reminders and repetition.

So, a few chapters later in Ezra, Cyrus' decree will be repeated as a reminder of what is going on and the importance of what was happening in that vision.³

So to repeat, in 1994, Brad wrote his vision out AND then there was a follow-up to Brad's vision. The Vestry had commissioned a church consultant to help the parish and that new Rector with that vision.

The title of the **consultant's report** says a lot:

***St. Timothy's Episcopal Church
Herndon, Virginia
A Lincoln Town Car With A Model T Engine***

"A Lincoln Town Car With A Model T Engine."

So you had Brad's Vision, and then you had The Reality.

The Report went on to describe all the strengths of the parish, what we had going for us in terms of the congregation and area, and the facilities and the leadership.

It explained the title as a "whimsical" way of saying that the church was, by way of another analogy, "a Walmart trying to operate like a 'mom and pop' store."

St. Timothy's, the report said, needed a larger staff and a building expansion and a renewed focus on stewardship that would allow for it to grow into the vision that Brad had set forth.

Guess what happened next?

³ Ezra 6.

As I said in my Stewardship Letter, Brad's vision came true.
You made it true, He made it true, God made it true.
Be Thou My Vision.

STEWARDSHIP

Now, Christian theology has something called a "Beatific Vision"—and it means the *summum bonum*, the absolute pure vision of God as he is. This will be enjoyed in heaven but can only be glimpsed at here on earth.

We see imperfectly and we yearn for that glimpse, that vision of God.⁴

Because of that, we do Stewardship every year, and we keep on visioning, looking for God in our midst and where God is leading us by the hand (or by the scruff of the neck) towards Him.

We keep repeating those things to remind ourselves of those visions that we need to keep our eyes upon. And so, with Stewardship, every year... we talk about Time, Talent and Treasure, we talk about how it's not the size of the pledge, and on and on and on.

For this year, I wish that I could say I planned it this way but I am not that good.... we have a new set of double doors in the narthex, hopefully you noticed them. These doors are a work in progress, like this Church, and like God's Vision for us here on earth.

But you will notice that it has glass in the body of the door, in the shape of a cross. "Be Thou My Vision"

Our vision should be cruciform, arranged as a cross. That is how we should see the world when we look out on it from this building, and what the world should see when they peer into about who we are.

That's the invitation and the vision this time around and every time.

I invite you to participate in that vision.

To look for evidence of God's vision and St. Timothy's vision around you.

The good news is that we are not like the Israelites from the 6th century, we don't have to repatriate, travel 1000 miles, and begin again.

The good news is, this time around, that we don't even have to build a new building addition. Or add more staff. Praise the Lord!

⁴ Richardson, Alan "Beatific Vision." *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Alan Richardson and John Bowden, eds. (1st ed. 1983). Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 63.

The invitation, the vision this time around is we have to maintain the building we have, we need to support the staff that we have, we need to support the ministries that we have, we need to support those sitting in the pews next to us.

Let that:

*1. Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me save that thou art.
Thou my best thought by day and by night;
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.*

AMEN