

TRINITY EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL

REPORT OF THE DEAN TO THE VESTRY

JANUARY 28, 2021

With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

—T.S. Eliot, “Little Gidding,” *The Four Quartets*

On this feast of Saint Thomas Aquinas, those lines of another Thomas—Thomas Stearns Eliot—have been rattling around my head. Now strictly speaking, Trinity Cathedral is not where I started. Nor have I really done all that much exploring since those days when last I served this place. (Four years in a picturesque Upstate New York village is not exactly a hardship post in some far-flung mission field.)

And yet this month has been for me an arrival back at a place I love—only the second place I served in ministry, so not too far from where I started, really. And with each moment I serve here amongst you once again, I know the place for the first time. My appreciation for the work of this Cathedral Parish grows. My excitement about working alongside colleagues new and old—yet all new, now—expands. My affection for the people of this place, who have been so extravagant in the kindness of their welcome, increases. I find myself knowing Trinity again for the first time—and giving thanks to God for the privilege of this new, old knowledge.

To be sure, there has been much that is both new and difficult. Services in the Cathedral still feel to me a bit uncanny, considering how very different they are from the full pews, vigorous singing, and hearty fellowship I once knew. And yet I am proud of the work of our staff and volunteers in interpreting and applying the Bishop’s stringent safety requirements, and therefore making it possible for us to worship in person. I am proud of our people for their patience and understanding—occasionally taxed by the frustrations of online registration hiccups and the nuisance of facemasks—in cooperating with our common effort. I am profoundly proud of the creativity of our clergy, musicians, and lay liturgical leaders for the development of a new, different, and wonderful worship experience outside under the oaks each Sunday. Because I know Trinity’s people and staff, none of this resilience is surprising or unexpected to me. And yet in all of it, I know the place for the first time.

And—by the grace of the God and the wise insights of my colleagues—I am seeing Trinity again for the first time. I am seeing again all of the promise and potential that pruned open my ears and heart to “the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling” that has brought us back here. And I’m also seeing again some of the opportunities that demand of us deeper exploration, and more honest assessment.

For as we look with eagerness to the end of this COVIDtide (“Season of COVID”), we will all of us arrive where we started, and begin to know this place for the first time. We will come back to the Trinity we love and see it with new eyes. We will be challenged to let go of our old suppositions, our old expectations, and our old modes of thinking.

God is, by his loving, exacting grace, using this difficult time to prepare us for things unimagined and unasked for in days gone by. It falls to us, the leaders of this place, to pursue with faithfulness and to prepare with diligence for that vision with which the Lord himself will captivate us. This season of loss—and it has indeed been a season of great loss, of so many and so much that we held dear—is preparing our hearts, our minds, our community, and our whole Cathedral for new life, new growth, new joy, new wonder. The furrows now may lie fallow. But already we are summoned to ready God’s plow, to spread God’s seed, to nourish God’s field, to receive God’s harvest, to join God’s feast.

I thank you, the Vestry that elected me to arrive at this place again for the first time, for the joy and privilege of serving as your Dean. I am humbled and awed by the task with which you have entrusted me, and I lay all of my unworthy efforts in that task at the foot of the Cross of Jesus. I covet your prayers in the days, and months, and years ahead, for myself, my family, my colleagues, and all those whom God has gathered here to be transformed by his Word and Sacraments, and to be sent forth to transform his world by the power of the Holy Spirit. To this old, new work in this old, new place, I pledge you my faithful service.

Quick now, here, now, always—
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.

REPORT TO THE VESTRY

Still Hopes Episcopal Retirement Community

January 2021

The Dean's Quarterly Visits

Heartfelt thanks from Still Hopes to Canon Grosso for maintaining the Dean's quarterly visit schedule to Still Hopes. The virtual format including two-way communication for Q and A. Residents enjoyed and appreciate the opportunity for every connection with Trinity and look forward to hosting Dean Boston. Scheduling is in process.

Lay Pastoral Care

Lay Pastoral Caregivers have kept in touch with Still Hopes residents by phone calls, birthday cards, and when possible, in personal contact.

Worship

Trinity's Sunday worship service is now provided for residents once a month, in the theater when permissible, and on the house TV channels when not permissible because of Covid. Those who can access virtual worship via a device find that when we can gather, the experience is enhanced by worshipping with others. Still Hopes provides weekly Eucharist services, at present broadcast from the chapel on the house TV stations.

Response by Still Hopes to the Pandemic

Still Hopes continues to work preemptively and aggressively against the pandemic. During the week of January 4, 2021, multiple vaccine clinics were held on the Still Hopes campus. All residents and employees, including employees of Solutions for Living at Home, had the opportunity to receive the first Covid vaccine. Appointments for receiving the second vaccine was secured for all, and future residents of the new Hopewell apartments were included. The Lay Pastoral Care Team reports that three parishioners (two households) tested positive for Covid during the holiday season. All have been released from quarantine and from medical care, and all are finding that full recovery is a lengthy process. Isolation and inactivity continue to be a serious threat to overall health, physical as well as mental - especially for those who are alone.

Resident Census of Trinity Parishioners

No parishioners have moved in since my last report in May. The number of Trinity residents decreased from 64 to 61 with the deaths of Hal Duvall, Frances LaBorde, and Frank (Bubber) Wyman. We have also been saddened by the death of Retired Bishop Charles Duvall. We look forward to welcoming residents to the new Hopewell apartments in the coming weeks.

Eleanor Whitehead
Still Hopes Representative

PARISH LIFE AND FELLOWSHIP

JANUARY 2021

From the beginning of the pandemic, the staff here at Trinity has been working together to find creative ways for parishioners to be involved. Most of what takes place right now could be considered to be part of Parish Life and Fellowship: from streaming worship services to on-line outreach.

Bibs Babson has done an incredible job of ensuring that families feel connected and involved. There were virtual and in person Advent activities and three Christmas pageants, with rehearsal on December 23. These all were a great time for many to come together to worship and were a special blessing for the seniors who participated.

The Epiphany Service was magnificent! Home Blessing bags with were given out at the service and the resources were available to pick up, as well as via email. These included suggested prayers, readings and chalk for marking the doorway with this blessing: "On Epiphany, it is traditional for families to bless their homes, remembering the hospitality of the Holy Family to the Wise Men and asking for protection and blessing on the home and all who enter."

The Advent Giving Tree was a huge success because of parish engagement. There have also been several outreach projects to help W.A. Perry families. Many here at Trinity generously and cheerfully donated money and time. Families often shopped together for needed items, giving them the chance to feel involved and to include their children.

Plans are underway for a Shrove Tuesday outdoor celebration with socially distanced games. Registration is taking place for "Team Trinity" to participate in the "Race for the Place". The Souper Bowl for Caring also takes place in February.

The Elsie Lamar chapter is gearing back up with plans for a devotional time with Teresa Glenn on February 22 and a Lenten Eucharist with Canon Del Priore in March.

To paraphrase from a Christmas favorite: "COVID didn't stop Christmas from coming- it came. Somehow or other, it came just the same." Christmas came and was celebrated with grandeur due to the many labors of love from all here at Trinity. We continue to have meaningful services and glorious music. Bibs and Canon del Priore press on in their search for safe ways to gather us together. They welcome input from the Vestry going forward.

Adult Formation Ministries

- 2020 Review

As was the case with virtually every ministry at Trinity, adult formation programs in 2020 were not what they had been in years past. We were able to offer several programs, but opportunities to meet for learning became a challenge to coordinate during the pandemic.

We did offer several Sunday morning series during the spring and the fall, including classes on Anglicanism and on understanding and overcoming addiction. The Growing in Christ group also met via Zoom for much of the year.

We were able to schedule two offerings of the All Trinity Reads program, and read David Zahl's *Seculosity* in the spring and John Lewis' *One Blood* in the fall.

The Lenten speakers series started strong with good presentations from the Reverend Keith Grogg and the Reverend Jack Hardaway. We unfortunately had to cancel the remainder of the speakers series presentations, and so will hope to hear from the others who were scheduled to present at a future date.

The two weekly Men's Bible Studies combined their meetings into one weekly Zoom gathering and met throughout the year. Likewise, members of the Ark group continued to meet via digital media once meeting at the cathedral became impracticable.

- 2021 Opportunities & Challenges

We can continue to offer some version of many of the formation ministries that are at this point familiar to Trinity's congregation: Sunday and midweek classes, weekly Bible studies, reading groups, and occasional presentations can all be facilitated using digital media.

There is, however, a larger question to be asked about whether or not these kinds of programs will be sufficient to provide Trinity's members with the formation they will need in the coming years. In other words, it may be our current formation strategies and offerings need to be revised, if indeed we believe Trinity is now entering a time in its life for which it will be necessary to be more intentional about encouraging participation in formation offerings. Engaging this question will require giving thought both to the way we understand and articulate growth and maturity in the life of faith, and to the way our shared life encourages and fosters growth in the life of faith.