

**Senior Warden's Report**  
**Three Challenges**  
**David Danforth**

**206<sup>th</sup> Annual Parish Meeting**  
**January 28, 2018**

Thank you, Dean Jones. Thank you, Trinity disciples, clergy, and staff.

Wow! What a year. Little did I know as a Cub Scout here in the 1950's and an acolyte in the 1960's that I would one day become the Senior Warden at Trinity. When I was asked to consider standing for this position, I looked at a list of the past senior wardens. I had to gulp at all those distinguished names. Why did they serve? What were their challenges? Would I be worthy and able? Then I realized that I needed to be quiet and listen to God. So here I am at the end of my term as Senior Warden.

There is a slogan developed for the Peace Corps and later adopted others. You know it. "The toughest job you will ever love." Let me add Senior Warden to that list. It has been an honor and a challenge, and I have loved it. And of course, I thank you, my fellow disciples at Trinity for your support.

Why have I loved this job? I believe it has been a calling and that God wanted me for his good purposes here. I am all for that because worship, service, involvement, and mission are all elements of why I love Trinity and why I wanted to serve in this position as Senior Warden.

I have been grateful to serve God through Trinity and to serve you, God's people. I have worked with so many talented and dedicated people here at Trinity including our clergy, staff, our Vestry, Foundation, and numerous others. I deeply appreciate the dedication and service of all of you. The breadth of talent and dedication at Trinity is amazing, and I believe those characteristics will serve Trinity well in the future.

I want to speak about the future, not the buildings or other issues we faced this year. Yes, we are moving on the Trinity Center repairs and the kitchen but I want to focus on the future. So, let's look to the future at Trinity. First remember that it is all in God's hands. Our mission is to listen to God and to keep Him central to everything we do at Trinity. We must recognize that "Times, they are a changin'" as Bob Dylan sang. Society is changing, and we can see it not only at Trinity but everywhere. There is a tendency today to reserve commitment to institutions such as Churches either personally or financially. We see it at Trinity in several related aspects, and I want to issue three challenges today.

1. First you can see the commitment issue on Sundays with attendance lower that it has been in the past. That is a trend that is not unique to Trinity. It is happening throughout the church. Is there some way to reverse this trend at Trinity because regular worship should be the main thing we do? Ask yourselves or ask your friends and family, what is more important on Sunday than worship? If you think something else is more important, then I challenge you to think again.

2. Second, you hear the word, engagement, around Trinity frequently. What does that mean? I look out at this meeting today, and I see many fellow disciples who are heavily engaged in God's work both at Trinity and elsewhere. But what about others? You know them; perhaps you are even related to them; I am. Are they truly engaged which means being involved with a deeper, more personal level of feeling and involvement in What God wants for them?

So my second challenge is, "What can you do or what can someone you know do to become more engaged?" It is pretty simple really; just find something at Trinity in which to participate. Our Canon for Parish Life, Dorian Del Priori, has begun an engagement process called Worship Plus One. Central is worship as I described earlier. Next is to find something more, the Plus One part – serve meals, call on a shut in, volunteer at the Welcome Center, attend a mid-week Bible study, attend Evensong, come to a Wednesday night program - you name it. Here is something radical, if you don't see something that appeals to you, start your own! By the way, that is how the regular Sunday breakfast and the Christmas breakfast started. Some folks wanted to do more, and we made it happen. Through this engagement, coupled with regular worship, you will be well on your way as a growing Christian.

3. Third challenge. We in leadership have seen this lower commitment manifested in the level of pledging over quite a number of years. I may be preaching a bit to the choir today in this meeting because I suspect that most of you pledge, that is, you make a signed financial commitment to God's work through Trinity. However, over the past decade, the number of financial pledges has steadily decreased while the overall amount of the pledges has remained generally flat or slightly higher but from a decreasing base of regular pledging people. I don't know who pledges but thank you if you do pledge. We have to base our budget mainly on the level of pledges. As recently as a few days ago, we sent numerous letters and called people who had previously pledged for 2017 but not yet for 2018 here at the end of January. Why is that?

This year we were forced to cut back on budget requests or even balance the budget because we did not have enough pledges to support growth of God's kingdom through Trinity. Yes, we also get donations, some quite regular. Of course, we thank you for those contributions, but they are not pledges, and we cannot put as much weight on them for budgets.

So what does all of this mean for Trinity? We have wonderful worship and programs here such as music and so many mission and outreach opportunities, all designed to help us to fulfill our Baptismal covenant that calls us to mission as God's disciples in the world. But are we being good stewards of God's gifts to each of us? Do we truly understand and embrace the fact that all we have comes from God and that we are called to return a portion of those gifts in thankfulness? Without adequate support from God's disciples at Trinity, we cannot fulfill what God wants us to do through Trinity.

So I ask each of you a challenging and maybe disturbing question. "Are you financially supporting God's work here or are you essentially paying club membership dues or

paying for services rendered? Which answer you give signifies a very different understanding of God's blessings. I challenge you to consider in thankfulness your pledges and gifts based on God's blessings and what God may be calling us to do for his kingdom through Trinity.

So those are my thoughts and challenges to you. Worship, get more engaged, and support God's work through Trinity.

For you parents out there, someday one of your choristers or acolytes may grow up to be Senior Warden. What will Trinity be in the future? It will probably be different than today, but I am sure that its mission will be to engage in God's work in the world. What Trinity will be is up to us as we listen to God. To quote the Psalmist, "Be still and know that I am God." I might paraphrase, "Be still and listen to God." When you stop and listen, you like young Samuel in the temple, can say "Here I am Lord."

Thank you and God bless all of you.