

**RECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT  
ANNUAL MEETING OF TRINITY CHURCH, FISHKILL, NY  
FEBRUARY 8, 2009**

I give thanks to God for the life and mission of this congregation. I am privileged to be your Rector at this time, in this place.

In a few short verses, the Gospel today (Mark 1: 29 – 39) provides a glimpse into the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. It begins in the Synagogue, moves into engagement with the world, engagement with demons and illness, with the needs of those around him. Jesus then finds time for solitude with God in prayer before he returns to his mission of preaching and healing. It is a pattern that continues to shape the ministry of all who would be a disciple.

We gather Sunday by Sunday to make sense of our world, to find meaning for our lives in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. In hearing anew the story, by faithfulness of the command to take bread and wine in memory of the One who died and rose again for us, we find communion with the God of all creation, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the Body of Christ in our world today. Like Jesus, we are sent out into the world to proclaim the Gospel, to heal the wounded-ness in our lives and in the world around us. And day by day, we are invited to find those places of solitude in which we can connect in prayer with our God who will empower us with the Spirit of the Risen Christ to be faithful disciples.

Diana Butler Bass researches and writes about mainline Protestant churches and how congregations need to change to meet the needs of a changing world. In a book entitled *The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church* she points to a renewed trend in mainline churches. She speaks of churches of the 21<sup>st</sup> century:

. . .religious communities focus on meaning-making by gathering up the past and representing it through both story and action in ways that help people connect with God, one another, and the world outside the doors of church buildings. It encompasses both pattern and practice.”<sup>1</sup>

What I read in Diana Bass is that we as Episcopalians need to be intentional about what we already do well: worship; mission; and spirituality. All three are essential to a life of discipleship.

Worship is not an optional activity for a Christian. Worship is the heart of who we are and is the activity in which we envision who God is for us. It is the pattern of our lives. In worship, we are

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<sup>1</sup> Bass, Diana Butler: *The Practicing Congregation*: p. 4

shaped by the story – by Holy Scripture, and in our actions of praise and thanksgiving, of eating and drinking, we are connected with God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, and we are connected with one another in the Body of Christ. Our relationship with one another is bonded in our common faith, and our relationship with the world is shaped by the demands of the Gospel. We are to love one another as we have been loved, and to serve one another as Christ has served us. We are called to become the voice of the outcast and the marginalized of our society. We are to feed the hungry and to become instruments of God’s justice, peace, compassion, and mercy. It is how we practice our faith.

To be disciples, to do the work of the kingdom of God, also demands our connection with God on a daily basis. We need to exercise our spiritual life so that we can continue to grow in our ministry as individuals and as a community of faith. The story will make no sense if we are not schooled in scripture. Our praise and thanksgiving will become hollow words if, in our daily lives, we cannot give thanks to God for the abundance of our blessings. Our life in the Spirit of the Risen Christ will not be able to grow if we never open our lives to the movement of the Spirit in prayer. In the reports you will read about the many ministries which support and sustain the worship, mission, and spirituality of Trinity Church.

Trinity is blessed with many people who offer themselves for the service of worship. The choir spends many hours practicing to make an offering of praise to God through anthems, the leading of service music and hymns. Music shapes the “feeling”, the mood of our worship and I am grateful for the quality of music we have in the congregation. Acolytes, Eucharistic Ministers, Ushers, and the Altar Guild are all essential to the experience of worship. I want to thank especially Sharon Urquhart for taking responsibility for reorganizing the ushers this year.

Mission outreach has grown significantly this past year. New ministries have been initiated this year which involve personal contact among people in need. Locally there is ministry in partnership with Hillcrest House, the Fishkill Food Pantry, and House of Hope as well as our own emergency Food Pantry. Trinity continues to reach out across the river to Episcobuild, a project of Habitat for Humanity in Newburgh, NY. Three members of Trinity, Deb Hillard, Lila Mead, and Andrew Mead, in partnership with the Vassar Haiti Project, visited St. Paul’s in Chermaitre Haiti to assess needs and areas in which we could respond. Comfort Cooks, which provides a ministry among the members of the congregation, has been well received.

Through various programs we have sought to support and nourish the spiritual journey of all members of Trinity. Godly Play brings our youngest children into age appropriate engagement with

both story and prayer. Journey to Adulthood continues that engagement through their Sunday program and special events. This past year we have heard Luader Smith, the founder of House of Hope, and Canon Robert Brooks on issues of social justice. We are blessed with the scholarship of parishioners. Sheila Newman offered two classes, one on Women in the Bible with Irene Zito, and another on the Exodus Story and Moses. Classes were offered on an introduction to the Episcopal Church as well as preparation for Confirmation and Reception. There were opportunities for exploring meditative prayer in the Taize Evening Prayers which were offered as well as the Advent Quiet Days. The Bible Study group and the Women's Book Club provided ways in which we engaged our faith in the context of our daily lives.

One of the least known ministries of this congregation is the Intercessory Prayer Group. It is a group of people, connected by email, who are committed to praying for the needs of the congregation. They know that prayer makes a difference that the Holy Spirit continues to be an instrument of healing in our world today. If you are interested in joining this ministry, speak to Terry Badura.

We are a dynamic and creative community and yet there is room to grow and to change. With the current economic situation we all have to reduce our expenses. For the first time in several years we have experienced a decline in our pledges for 2009. Although we have had several families move away and parishioners have died, there has been a net increase in our membership. We currently have 165 family units but only 85 have made a pledge for 2009. I would urge you, if you have not made a pledge of financial commitment to the life and ministry of Trinity that you do so. If you want to know more about pledging, please speak to a member of the Vestry, a Warden, or myself.

Look around, you will see new faces. We have been blessed over the past year to have many visitors to Trinity on Sunday morning. This past year we have welcomed ten new singles or families into the parish for a total of 18 new members. This past year I have heard over and over again from people who have been at Trinity for some time, "I come to church and I don't know the people any more." Growth means change, and as the community changes it makes demands on how we communicate with each other and how we connect with one another. You have to be engaged to form community.

In creating a new position of a Parish Administrator and hiring Linda Herrera, our networking with one another, our communication, and our ability to get accurate information out to people have vastly improved. This year we made significant improvements in the ways in which we have communicated electronically. Fred Villforth and others spent countless hours working on the

new website which has won praise throughout the Diocese. We have initiated a Constant Contact form which allows us to put out weekly notices as well as breaking news. Our newsletter is now published electronically but still available in hard copy for those who do not have access to the internet. Due to health concerns, Bob Beattie had to relinquish the newsletter but Hance Huston has filled the gap and continues to publish the news for which we are very grateful. We are also grateful to Wayne Bunker who made the prominent sign which now graces Route 52.

However, electronic and print communication will never replace people- to-people contact. Jean Winkler, along with an army of people, has put on events which have fostered communication. From the Trinity Eve Round-Up and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Picnic to the Stewardship Luncheon and the Wednesday Day-Timers' Lunches, we have deepened the connections begun at the table of the Lord to the tables of Trinity. It is one of the ways in which we get to know one another. Coffee hour seems like such an incidental event, yet it is an essential place where we get to know each others' names and begin conversations. Coffee hour is the extension of our communion at the altar. The community formed in Eucharist gets to know one another in conversation. Episcopalians are a strange lot. Generally, we don't eat and run. It is one of the ways we become a community who knows each other by name.

Building a practicing Christian Community requires time and commitment. I would challenge you this year to commit yourself to one area in the life of this community in which you will offer your gifts, your time, and your commitment. If everyone pitches in, the ministry God gives us will be accomplished.

We are a practicing Christian Community. We are followers of Jesus Christ, rooted in worship, generous in giving to the needs of others, and fostering our relationship with God and one another. As we move through these coming months and years we will face new challenges in our economy, in the world around us, and in this congregation. However, I am convinced that God will provide the resources to carry out the ministry that we are called to do in this place. We will be stretched, we will grow, and above all we will continue to give praise and thanksgiving to God through Jesus Christ our Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Rev. Sr. Jean Campbell, OSH