

Interim Pastor's Report

January 17, 2010

In the Name of God, the Holy and Undivided Trinity. Amen.

Dear Friends in Christ,

During the first five months of my ministry among you as Interim Pastor, I have experienced generous hospitality, steadfast devotion, and encouraging progress with this community of faith. You have outdone yourselves and we are moving forward in hopeful expectation.

I am here because I am a transition specialist and have the privilege of walking with you during this transition to assist you in

- remembering where you have been,
- claiming who you are,
- strengthening your leaders,
- drawing upon the resources of the wider church,
- making a commitment to a new era of fruitful mission with your new rector.

Statistical information regarding attendance, membership, finances, and pastoral work is covered in other places in the Annual Report. So, I will highlight some of the accomplishments we have experienced with God's help since Fr. Jensen was called to be Dean of Trinity Cathedral in Little Rock.

- Our devoted staff of twelve lay and clergy, paid and unpaid, full and part-time saints has worked diligently to assist in the ongoing life and mission of the parish.
- We have had exceptional pastoral care of the parish with a team of three deacons, an associate priest, and skilled laity.
- Attendance at our three distinctly different Sunday services has been encouraging.
- The Vestry and Wardens have worked closely with me in making several timely changes in parish administration, including:
 - Revisions and updates of governing documents
 - Improvements to accounting and financial reporting policies and procedures
 - Adoption of a balanced budget aligned with ministry areas and new outreach emphasis
 - Developing new written position descriptions for paid and unpaid staff
 - Strengthening the ability of the endowment to attract legacy stewardship gifts
 - Engaging in a short-range strategic planning process to
 - Clarify parish history,
 - Assess present parish identity
 - Create an new organizational model and begin to staff it,
 - Identify goals and action items
 - Assign responsibility and resources,
 - Institute policies and procedures for fund raising within the parish
- We shared leadership with an exceptional team in conducting an effective annual stewardship campaign.

In the coming months, I am looking forward to continuing to lead the parish in a number of important actions that are necessary for a good transition in preparation for the next rector. Those actions include:

- Improvements in Christian formation for all ages
- Increasing our interface with young adults at University of Kansas and Haskell University to facilitate involvement of parish in greater support of campus ministries
- Continuing enhancement of evangelism efforts with greater media presence, more effective response to newcomers, and more reliable systems for incorporating new people into parish life

- Continuing expansion of communications to include electronic newsletter, enhanced website, online pictorial directory, social networking, telephone tree, communications team, and a quarterly journal
- Auditing and updating membership records
- Development of a functioning Property Committee to work with the Junior Warden
- Continuing efforts to strengthen ties with the diocese and wider Church
- Expansion of the work of the Trinity Environmental Stewardship Team and their relationship with newly appointed Deacon for Earth Care Ministry for the Diocese of Kansas
- Guiding the Nomination Committee in managing leadership changes
- Increasing our engagement with ecumenical partners in worship and in service
- Heightening Trinity's profile in the wider Lawrence community

There are several areas of our work together that deserve special mention. I'll organize my thoughts along the lines of the Baptismal Covenant.

- **The Great Commandment & Great Commission** ~ Remember who you are! We enter the Church through Baptism. The presence of the water in the Baptismal Font at the entrance of the Nave is a reminder of that. Week by week as we enter the church, we are reminded of why we came back – to give thanks for the gift of new life in Christ, who gave us our mission in the *Great Commandment*, to love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind and our neighbor as ourselves. While we are here, God feeds us in Word and Sacrament, blessing us with that which we do not have and cannot do for ourselves. Then, we are sent back into the world to love and serve others in Christ's name. As we leave, the water of the Font is to remind us of the *Great Commission*. My friend and colleague, The Rev. Sam Todd writes, "The great miracle of the mass is not that bread becomes the body of Christ but that the Church does (cf. I Cor. 12:27). I would love to hear the bells pealing as Christ re-enters the world in the person of the members of his body at the end of the Eucharist." That is the reason Christ created the Church and sent the Holy Spirit to empower us as a central part of his plan for the redemption of creation. That is who we are and that is what we do. Everything else hinges on that. If we are faithful in living out that miracle, God will provide us with all that is necessary for fruitful lives. We receive the Sacrament so that we might become the Sacrament to a world in need of hope, healing, and love to the glory of God alone.
- **Continue in the Apostles' Teaching** ~ Participate in Christian formation. Surprisingly few people participate in ongoing Christian education and formation. The depth of Christian experience will be positively impacted by a commitment to Christian education and formation. I appeal to each one of you to make a renewed commitment to growing in grace and in the knowledge and love of Christ.
- **Continue in Fellowship** ~ Focus upon and be accountable to one another for the quality of the community of Christ's people in this place. It is the most important asset of all. Every study of thriving mainline churches I read makes it abundantly clear that it is the quality of community life that makes the greatest difference, attracts new members, and retains existing ones. If you will ask God daily to help Trinity Church be the kind of community of faith God wants you to be, you will live into that identity and the future of this parish, though radically different, will be better than ever before. The quality of community life here is good. However, in some ways Trinity is operating like a much smaller church with many decisions and activities that rest on one person. That needs to change and we hope the new organizational system will help accomplish the changes that will help Trinity function in line with the size parish we actually are. Not to do so will lead to declining participation and membership and nobody wants that.
- **Continue in the Breaking of Bread and in the Prayers** ~ Share in corporate worship. Sunday attendance is pretty good at Trinity. But there are too many empty pews at most services. The many distractions are tempting. But, as Jesus told Martha and Mary of Bethany, "One thing is necessary." I challenge each member to make a new commitment to regular participation in worship. If you attend once a month, you can attend twice. If you attend twice, you can attend three times. If you attend three times, why not try

for four? As a member of the Episcopal Church, you are a season ticket holder! And there's more. I challenge each of you to invite one person to join you in worship at Trinity during 2010. Did you know that most people become members of a church because someone they know first invited them? Surely you know someone who is not active in a church in Lawrence who would be receptive to an invitation to worship with you at Trinity one Sunday out of the year. If you can't invite them to worship, how about inviting them to some other function in this parish?

- **Resist Evil, Seek and Serve Christ, & Strive for Justice, and Peace** ~ One of my most significant discoveries at Trinity is the remarkable level of outreach. It is one of Trinity's best-kept secrets. Last year, through a variety of efforts, approximately \$120,000 was spent on others, approximately 20% of the total amount we spent for all things. Almost half of that amount was not reported because it simply went through pass through accounts in our financial system. The vestry and I have included the projected income and investments in outreach in the 2010 budget so the level of outreach will be more transparent and, therefore, obvious. That financial support is coupled with an extraordinary number of persons who are rolling up their sleeves and working on behalf of our neighbors in need. This is something to celebrate and to build upon. Don't keep it a secret.
- **Proclaim the Good News by Word and Example** ~ Grow generous givers. Our stewardship efforts in preparation for 2010 reflected an increase in the amount pledged. However, the giving level in this parish has room to grow. We ended the year 2009 with a balanced budget but it was too close for comfort. In 2010, we have projected a balanced budget. That budget is based on a great deal of trust in those who have made pledges of financial support. It is also based on confidence that there will be growth in stewardship throughout the year. The tradition of 80% of the membership expecting 20% to bear a disproportionate share of the responsibility for the financial stability of the parish is a tradition that needs to be replaced by a more balanced and equitable approach. I suggest to you that the biblical principle of the tithe is the most obvious, simple, and reliable way to achieve this balance and I urge every member of this parish to take the necessary steps that will lead to tithing.
- **Respect the Dignity of Every Human Being** ~ There are many, many hearts and hands that have touched me, encouraged me, supported me, and with whom I am privileged to share in the building up of the Church for the work of ministry. I give thanks to God for Bishop Wolfe and the diocesan staff, Canons Siegmund and Loya, the community of Priests and Deacons of this diocese and this parish, the devoted Wardens and Vestry, our fine staff, a host of people who contribute to our worship, faithful disciples of Jesus Christ in all levels of parish life, hoards of people engaged in meaningful outreach, and numerous neighbors here in Lawrence make this parish a very blessed place for me. You will remain in my prayers and in my heart for ever. I am confident that your next rector will encounter the same!
- **Finally** ~ As we continue the journey together through transition, my prayer for you is that you will embrace the changes that are coming with confidence, conscious that you are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses who cheer you on, and that you will lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely that it can hold you back, and run with perseverance the race that is set before you, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

Faithfully yours,



Ronald D. Pogue
Interim Pastor