

All Saints – 11/6/2016; Trinity Episcopal Church

For all the saints, who from their labors rest,

We often think of saints as those women and men who are well known to us – people who have led extraordinary lives or done extraordinary things, and we remember them this day, of course, but we also remember these saints -

our loved ones who have shaped our lives and helped us to become who we are today

[Name Redacted] – beloved husband and father. Married for 54 years without ever quarrelling with his wife

[Name Redacted] - mother who had a hard lot but also shared much joy later in life.... (here follow 54 other names...ending with....)

[Name Redacted] – an uncle who was a choir member for over 50 years. Taught his nephew that singing hymns is praying twice and encouraged him to pursue church music.

These are some of our saints – parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, children, cousins, friends, grandparents,

Where would we be without the love of these people in our lives, and I don't just mean where would we be personally, but where would we be as a faith community.

As I held in my hands the slips of paper where you all wrote a bit about these people you have loved and who have loved you, I felt a connection to them because I see them in you and in this little faith community, and I gave thanks for parents who in the 1950's cared about marginalized

children. I gave thanks for those who taught about friendship and hospitality and radical acceptance, for those who valued education and working with our hands and those who were a light in the darkness, and those who loved church music.

These loved ones of ours had no way of knowing that their lives lived in Michigan and Georgia and Tennessee and Pennsylvania and England and so many other places, would have such a profound impact on us here at Trinity Episcopal Church in Kirksville.

Today, as a faith community, it is the final day of our stewardship campaign. It is appropriate to look back a bit and see the rich legacy which has been entrusted to us. An Episcopal faith community has worshiped on these grounds since 1870 – for 146 years, and next year we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of our building.

I want to read to you an excerpt of a letter written about Trinity – we think in the late 70's. It comes from a report on a visit from the Standing Committee.

“The proclamation of the gospel takes many forms, but one strain...carries through in both memory of their history and in their present life together. That strain is the proclamation that people are accepted and valued where

they are and that many different people with varying gifts and commitments have been offered and welcomed to a place in the community. In their memory is the fact that when the Unitarian Fellowship of Kirksville discontinued – all its remaining members came to Trinity and were accepted into its fellowship...More current comments relating to the Gospel of acceptance are stated reputation, reported proudly that Trinity is a congregation of “eccentrics”. There is the husband who is a “dinner Episcopalian who has not been pressured or excluded. (His involvement is in attending the social functions).”

It says more, but you get the idea.

As I read this letter, I thought “yes, this who we are - accepting people and loving them even when they are unlike us in many ways.”

Yesterday the search committee and I met with our Canon to the Ordinary, and one of the things we talked about it that Trinity is always in transition because so many people who find a home here are just passing through. That is the nature of a community with a university and medical school. I wonder how it might shape us if rather than lamenting that we are small and people are always leaving, we embraced that as part of our mission.

One of the things we do well is to give a temporary home to people in transition. Several years ago a young lesbian couple found a home among us while one of them was in medical school. When it was time to move on, we sent them with our blessing. They were with us only for a time, but in many ways they will always belong to us. Last weekend 7 of us from Trinity traveled to Colorado for their wedding. I know of no other church in northeast Missouri who would have given a temporary home to a young lesbian couple. And the giving was not one-sided. They contributed immensely to what we do here. Their time here helped to shape us.

What we do here matters.

So, I ask you to consider how it is you might contribute in this next year to make sure that we are able to continue to do what we do; to be a temporary home for people passing through, to continue to feed people, to provide grief support for parents who have lost children, to be a place of radical acceptance for eccentrics, to be a sanctuary for the GLBTQ community when our sisters and brothers are killed in a night club, to be a place of joy and wonder and faith and doubt.

And I don't mean just next year, but to consider how what you give now will continue the legacy of this place, so that one day when [Name

Redacted] and [Name Redacted] (who are not yet 2 days old) might travel through here in 50 years, they will have a place to visit where they might recount the stories their parents told them about this place that loved and cared for them when they were babies.

AMEN