



TRINITY TIMES

SEPTEMBER 2007

Trinity Episcopal Church

Trinity Episcopal Church
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Geoffrey Brown
Clerk
Martha Nesbitt
Treasurer

Al Dorf, Bob Reid
Assistant Treasurers

Christine Gevert
Organist/Choir Director

Denise Lancto
Sunday School

Lisa Brennan, *Bookkeeper*
Jeff Silvernale, *Grounds*
Junior Wright, *Sexton*
Alexis Dorf, *Trinity Times*

FROM THE VICAR'S DESK:

WHAT THEN MUST WE DO? PART III OF III



I was recently at an informal gathering of clergy. In some sort of human mitosis or ecclesial square dance, the room has split into various smaller groups. I'm sitting with two rectors and a retired priest. I am late to the conversation. They are talking about congregations that should be closed. They mention several in the diocese. It is inevitable, but one of the rectors completes the list by adding, "Oh, and Trinity, Lime Rock should go, too."

Do I take umbrage? Do I defend a parish of which I have only just become vicar? Do I point out that rectors should probably only serve as experts of their own congregations and not of others? Yes, yes, and yes. I also observe that Trinity can be, through proper stewardship and real evangelism, a thriving congregation on a par with that of the rector/expert's.

"How can that be? It's just a small congregation."

"Because the future of the Episcopal Church will be found in small parish ministry."

Yep, I said it, and it is not something that I say lightly, especially to rectors of large parishes. However, it is something I say with an experiential foundation, having served as the rector of large congregations, and appreciating that there would be few who would agree with me.

As I have mentioned earlier, in twenty-five years of service in the Episcopal Church I have experienced countless forms of official evangelism programs, all designed to build the church triumphant in ways that supercharge mission, ministry, and

membership. In those twenty-five years, I have also watched the Episcopal Church lose approximately 700,000 members. I understand the frustration sometimes expressed by those who design such programs. After all, if something worked in one parish or in one diocese, why wouldn't it work everywhere?

Perhaps that frustration identifies the problem. Individual congregations, like individual human beings, all have their own ways of perceiving the parameters of belief, of responding to the call of faith, and of manifesting that sense in their intentions and actions. In part, this is the thinking behind Trinity's purpose statement. "Offering Companionship on the Way" is not some superficial attempt to sound profound, but a real understanding of what we have been and what we are in the performance of our mission work. Some people will have a life-long relationship with Trinity; others a more transient experience. The point to our endeavors is to ensure that all who *worship within* our parish are able to take away something that builds upon their spiritual journey. It is our call to promote a sense of evangelism that is organic and, with a percolator-like effect, rises from this individual understanding and its practice.

In order to be evangelical, that is, to answer the spiritual needs of the community, a parish uses programs, prayers, and, especially, participation to address its requirements. Large congregations, because of the greater number of people and inherent communication complications, cannot respond with the nimbleness of a small parish. I have served larger parishes that will brag about their book clubs, social programs, giant tag sales and the like, only to find that few, if any, of the people who attend such gatherings actually attend worship services. If a program or event does not ultimately encourage participation in the worship and mission life of a parish, then it is aimless. It is activity without accomplishment. Jesus' very direct call to us is to bring people to where the Gospel is proclaimed, the sacrament met, and the forum for individual proclamation provided.

The best evangelism, and the best way to proclaim the Gospel in our corner of Litchfield County, is to celebrate the intimacy of our community of faith. Our very smallness is our greatest strength.



In the manner of the earliest Christians, our ability to meet and invite on an individual basis will be what determines our future. It is good

thing to encourage people to attend an art show, a concert, join in a July 4th cookout, or kick a soccer ball around a field; these events we reasonably offer as neighbors in a greater community. But to bring people to actual and unapologetic worship, to a sacred space that offers tranquility, thoughtfulness, and intention, is the real purpose of evangelism. It is also the one that leads to new ideas in ministry and mission, a greater sense of spiritual responsibility and empowerment, and a vibrant response to that eternal question first posed to John the Baptist on the shores of the Jordan River, "What then must we do?"

It is also the invitation that can, and I prayerfully hope will, transform contemporary Christianity.

Father Rob

THANKS !



...To soccer coordinator Geoff Brown and his team of coaches and assistant coaches for a terrific Sunday Summer Soccer program. We had about 90 participants over the course of three months! Appreciation is offered also to the anonymous donors of the 2007 summer soccer t-shirts.



...To all who participated in the back to school lunchbox program coordinated by Cheryl Duntz, our outreach chair. Thirteen lunchboxes and a backpack, along with lots of nonperishable foods to fill those lunchboxes and backpack, were donated to Salisbury Family services.



...to Martha Baer, for her usual impeccable job of designing the Art Show exhibit, and to John Lloyd, Al Dorf and Ginny Dildine for hanging and labeling the paintings, photos and other art work. Kudos are due Linda Lloyd as well for her chairing this annual fundraiser, and to Trudy Washburn, Ginny Dildine, Jane Lipton and Cynthia Conklin for hosting the opening night reception.

UPCOMING!

As always, Trinity will be starting the “real new year” off with a number of programs and services.



On Sunday, Sept. 2 at 6 pm we will hold our “see you in September” potluck picnic. Al Dorf and John Lloyd will be grilling the steaks (or whatever you wish to have grilled); participants provide the salads, sides, chips, desserts and what-
evers.



September 9 marks registration for the church school year. If there is a young person in your home or family who is of Sunday School age, please do bring him or her along that morning! The old saying “there are only two things we can give our children—one is roots and the other wings” most definitely applies here. In a culture that values affluence, achievement and appearance above all other values, the church offers a place to find those things which are beyond price and beyond the whims and fancies of the day.



The members of local emergency services groups will be honored on Sept. 16 at the 10:30 Eucharist. Those who risk their own lives in order to protect and preserve the lives of others are important members of our communities, and we will recognize their contributions that morning. After the service we will adjourn to Trinity field for the blessing of

the equipment our EMTs and firefighters use. It will be a morning of appreciation and of fun!



Brainstorming Sunday will be held on Sept. 23 after the 10:30 service. Father Rob welcomes any and all ideas for program, mission and ministry at Trinity, so this is the time to bring along your great inspiration! Remember, the only bad idea is the unspoken one!



The EFM (Education for Ministry) program begins on Wednesday, Sept. 19 from 3:30-5:30 in the library. This is a four year distance learning program for which participants sign up one year at a time. The four years cover the Old and New Testaments, Church History and 20th century theology. Textbooks are provided and homework is about 2 hours a week. No papers, no exams, and a nifty diploma at the end! It’s a seminary education without going to seminary! For further information, speak to MaryAnne Carley at 860-364-5652 or Alexis Dorf at 860-364-0816.



The Vicar’s Adult Forum will reconvene on Sept. 30 after coffee hour. We will spend three successive Sunday sessions learning about liturgy as metaphor. For some of us, perhaps we will finally begin to understand just exactly what it is we are *doing* on Sunday mornings...

AND MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR...



The Blessing of the Animals on Sunday, Oct 7 at 10:30 am. Small animals (leashed or caged) are welcome in church, larger ones will be blessed in the field following the service.

The Trinity Annual Holiday Bazaar on Dec. 1. from 10-2. We will need stocking stuffers, small gifts and all sorts of baked goods!



THOUGHTS FROM THE TRACTOR

One of my projects this past summer has been to try to practice mindfulness, or being in the moment, on a more regular basis. Normally, my mind is working, at various levels, on three or four different issues simultaneously. This mental multitasking has come to be a habit, and I think I miss a lot of what is going on around me when I am trying to work out next summer's vacation, plan the food for the Bishop's Conference on Stewardship, determine whether the riding ring needs to be dragged and remember which books I ordered from Amazon - all at the same time.

So I tried looking at what I was seeing and hearing in the world around me while I took my walk each day. I have walked the same area for 10 summers now , but during this year, I focused on becoming aware of what was actually there, aside from the crack and potholes in the road.

Here is what I saw: dandelions, buttercups, daisies, clover, wild chicory, black eyed susans, day lilies, Queen Anne's lace, wild grape vines and apple trees, all budding and then blooming and fading in their time. Lower branches of the apple trees, stripped by deer and cows, while the upper branches practically broke with the abundance of fruit!

A doe lying down and resting against a stone wall in a heavily wooded area. Twin fawns chasing each other around a field while their mother looked on, wearing the same expression all mothers wear while watching their children at play. A wild turkey, looking for all the world like a school crossing guard, standing in the middle of the road while the babies crossed from one side to the other. Another turkey, on another morning, standing on a stone wall and vocally encouraging her brood to come down out the of the tree where they were roosting on several branches. (I could just hear her saying : "Get up! You're going to be late for breakfast!") A gaggle of Canada geese, heads tucked under their wings, trying to get

some sleep, I suppose, while being loudly lectured about sloth by three crows sitting on nearby fence posts.

I noticed that as the summer progressed, the sun entered the thatched spaces in my straw hat from different angles at the same time of day. I realized that the light making its way across the leaves of a tree down the rocks and onto the little stream looks different at 7:15 than it did at 6:45 in the morning.

The sounds of summer – quiet in the earliest dawn, then waking with bird calls. The trickle of the creek, louder or softer depending on how much rain we have had, water splashing across rocks, the cry of the red tailed hawk. The whinnying of horses, the clucking murmur of the chickens who like to cross the road I walk each day, the lowing of the cows, the "up and at 'em!!" of my neighbor's rooster.

And most magical of all, the evening that a full moon cast a path on the beavers' pond, and I watched a beaver swim up the path with a stick in its mouth, on the way to the everlasting building of the dam. The beaver was observed not only by me, but by a doe sipping at the pond's edge, fireflies lighting up the evening, and tree frogs deafening all of us with their unending chorus.

And God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. Genesis 1: 31.

-Alexis Dorf



CONGRATULATIONS TO
CATHERINE DI MARTINO
AND
DANIEL BLANCO

WHO WERE MARRIED AT
TRINITY ON AUGUST 11.

"...so they are no longer two, but one flesh"
-Mark 10:8

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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