

March 15, 2021 Trinity Search Committee and Vestry Zoom Retreat Minutes

Attendees: Jane Redmont, Diocesan Consultant; Reverend Rebecca Blair, Interim Rector; John Wilson and Carol Westhaver, Search Committee Co-chairs, Denise Aldridge, Cyndi Bernhard-Sanger, Ben Bollinger, Joan Campbell, Jan Gaboriault, Mike McKay, Mark Young, Search Committee; Paul Aldridge, Colleen Gibson, Joan Lunn, Pam McKay, Rebecca Miller, Deb Shannon, Vestry

The Joint Meeting (Retreat) was called to Order at 6:40 PM.

Jane opened the meeting by reading two different versions (translations) of Psalm 42. She invited members of the group to speak in reaction to the Psalm. It is a sad Psalm, and she linked that sadness and a search for relief in the Psalm with the fact that it is almost exactly one year since the privations dictated by the Covid pandemic began. A similar search for relief, perhaps. Only one group member responded with the reaction that the Psalm reminded her of and connected her to her mother.

Jane then offered a meditation regarding the Lenten period. Lent is a time of seeking perspective and proportion. These are different for each of us, but Lent helps us to find the “right size” of who we are in relation to God. Lent is about redirecting and regaining perspective and proportion in relation to God, and each other. One member assessed going thru Lent as a process arriving at Easter and spiritual Resurrection. Another suggested it was a time to make a permanent lifestyle change.

Fasting, a form of denial of whatever choice, was likened to Alms giving. Developing a “compassion reflex”. Remembering that all that humankind has is thanks to God. Lent is a time of introspection which can be heavy. Energizing and regenerating, recognizing shortcomings and striving to improve.

Jane next introduced the concept of the “Beloved Community”. This is a term that was popularized by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. BC is what we strive to be. The “Sacred Ground” curriculum offered by the National Churches (locally, Trinity and the Congregational Church) is an academic approach to BC.

There was a short break, and, in the background, we listened to “O Healing River”. This was accompanied by the image of a tree by the river. The tree, representing strength, is sustained by the water from the healing river. For us, it is God who is the healing river. Jane prayed for the earth and for us to take care of it as it takes care of us. “Heal us O God” is the refrain as individual prayers are offered by various members of the group. It takes courage to learn history and create a new one.

Jane read a passage from Paul’s 2d letter to the Corinthians. It was about the ministry of reconciliation. We are ambassadors for Christ. We are reconciled thru Christ with God. As to being God’s people, we are all ambassadors. (Questions!) How are we (each of us) individually

an ambassador? and 2) What are some ways that we dream that Trinity can be an ambassador for Christ?

The group was then split up in to prearranged 10-minute break out groups of 4 persons per, with a charge to respond to the questions.

One group talked about the loss of opportunities to connect communally and spiritually with others during the pandemic. Specifically, the sense of exile from the community during the Christmas season, and the loss of togetherness in settings like the crafters group where people can talk and share experiences in a relaxed and informal setting.

Another group discussed the importance of being visible to the community like the outdoor Christmas tree and pictures in Parish Hall windows,

A third group discussed the importance of appearing welcoming and generous, being open. As a dream, maybe one big outreach project. Perhaps become a center for social justice, educate.

The fourth group envisioned a non-traditional house. We are welcoming, but we can't all relate to social injustice. How to be a beloved community.

The tree (by the river) shall not fear when heat comes.

A Search Committee update will go the whole parish after Easter.

Jane presented a review of the timeline of the Search process. The early part of the process, which is what we have been doing thus far with the surveys and group Zoom meetings, is very transparent, with the posting of Committee minutes, etc. Once the Parish Profile is posted, applications come in. The confidential stage begins here. Communication is now in generalities regarding names, credentials to be shared, etc. Then interviews at some point in person. Eventually, the search committee discerns and recommends to the Vestry, and when they approve the selection it goes to the Bishop and then the call is made.

The question was raised by a group member regarding what can be perceived as an irreconcilable set of expectations among parishioners. That is, our work has revealed that some don't want a new Rector who challenges them to think about social issues and there are others who feel exactly the opposite. Jane responded that we'll need to be upfront with applicants about this particular challenge that they'll face.

The question was raised does that problem need to be in the profile? One member responded with the fact that Jesus challenged people all the time. That is part of being a Christian.

There followed questions on the confidentiality issue. Even information which can be considered as general can be misconstrued. Reverend Rebecca responded by suggesting that

we try to imagine what people will surmise or conclude from data that we give them. Be careful.

Similarly, the question was raised about how much we reveal to the candidates. How many, how much longer, etc. There was a suggestion that we should have a corresponding secretary to communicate with applicants to be responsively courteous to applicants while not revealing anything specific.

There followed discussion about just how “welcoming” we are. The concept is more than just a cup of coffee and a donut. We need to make room for new people to participate as they can. How do we make them feel comfortable to contribute their talents?

Another question was raised regarding how much financial information should be included in the Profile. The answer is that actual candidates get to see whatever they want to see. Earlier on, there is not a need to be too detailed. Honest and straightforward is the best approach.

A review of our Mission Strategy followed.

- 1) Embracing brave change
- 2) Reimagining our Congregation
- 3) Building relationships
- 4) Engaging in our work for service and justice

Churches are changing; take heed.

The closing prayer was given at 9 PM. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully,

Mark Young