

This Church of Ours

I want to begin today finding out, and providing an opportunity for you to find out, a bit about the worshipping history of this congregation – I preached the Anniversary service for a congregation last Sunday who was celebrating 157 years of ministry.

Trinity Presbyterian Church is in its 42nd year!

Is there anyone here who has worshipped here for 42 years?

How about 30 years or more?

How about 10 years or more?

5 years or more?

Less than 5 years?

Each one of us has our own unique faith story and our own unique journey in faith. We have arrived here, in all sorts of ways, from all sorts of directions!

I want you to think for a moment about someone who has made a difference in your life when it comes to the church - when it comes to your faith. They might be living or dead. It might be a parent, or aunt or uncle, it might be a grandparent, or a Sunday school teacher, or a choir director. If you're desperate enough it might even be a minister! Not everyone has such a person, and that is fine. But consider if there is someone who comes to mind when it comes to introducing you to the faith, or nurturing you in the faith....someone who encouraged you, or affirmed you.....someone who let you know they cared about you. The legacy of the church has many different paths!

Can anyone share who that person is in their life?

Respond????

I think that finding out **WHY** a person shows up at church on Sunday morning is helpful and interesting. Routine. To have time with God. They like the singing. They have no choice in the matter! They want to pray for others. There will be people at church they want to see.

They want to get in touch with the Spirit of God. There are lots of different reasons why people show up at church on Sunday morning. I wonder if people who worshiped here 42 years ago, showed up here for the same reasons that you worship here now.

In 2019, options as to how to spend our Sunday morning are unlimited! We all have so many other things we could be doing on Sunday morning. In some ways, Sunday has become like any other day. You can do your banking, grocery shopping, go to a movie, play a sport, go shopping.... So with so many other options, what are you doing here?

Response-????

Living Faith, is a contemporary document produced by the church in 1984 and it has something to say about, among other things, the church.

When I was a little boy growing up in the Elgin United church, my sister and I used to sit in the pew and do this - "Here is the church, here is the steeple, open the doors and see all the people." Do you all know that one? As we got older and hopefully wiser, we learned that while we still refer to the building as the church, we also begin to see ourselves as the church.

Living Faith tells us that the church is Christ together with His people. That is an important phrase. We often hear others say, the church is the people, not the building. Living Faith says that the church is Christ together with His people. Christ **together with His people** is an essential phrase in the definition of church.

It goes on to say that we are called to **worship** and to **serve** God in all our lives.

I get that when it comes to **Sunday morning**....we worship and serve God.....**but all of life**..????..that sounds like a bit of a stretch doesn't it?

How might **we worship or serve God on a Monday morning**, or a **Wednesday night**? What might be an example of that?

Response????

Living Faith goes on to say that the church is one family under God. Do you find that it is a big surprise to meet a stranger and to find out that they go to church somewhere?!! Most people I know, don't go to church. But when we meet someone that does, I think we feel more akin to them. But do we restrict the family of God to only those who attend church? Do we restrict the family of God to only those who believe in Jesus Christ? What does the term, the family of God mean to you?

Living Faith says that the church is holy. A few weeks ago, we talked about the fact that hallowed, as in hallowed be Thy name, means – different, set apart. The church is holy....it is different from the work place. The church is somehow different from the town hall, from the sports field or the hockey rink. Yet we are called to bring the love of God, the spirit of God, the peace that passes all understanding everywhere we go.....into all of life, so that all that ground becomes hallowed, or holy, or set apart....the town hall, the hockey rink, the sports field, our homes. It is not for us to put on God when we come through these doors, and take God off as we leave. God goes with us, into all of life. And the presence of God being there, makes it holy!

Do people with whom you work, or play or socialize know that you attend church? Is it easy to talk to others about the fact that the church is important in your life, or do you prefer to keep that a secret? Who are all the people in your life that would describe you as a Christian? Who knows that your faith is important to you? Are you comfortable with that? Have you ever had a conversation about the sermon with someone after worship at the coffee hour?

I want you to think of the last time you had a conversation about:

Your faith, God, the church....when was that - and who was it with - and what was it about? If you don't talk about theological issues after church with your church family, then when and with whom?

Response?

Living faith declares that the church is catholic. That is confusing for some people. As I said a couple of weeks ago when we were talking about the Apostle's Creed, the word Catholic means far-reaching, universal, broad based, inclusive of all people of all time who affirm the Christian faith.

The church is apostolic. Founded on Christ and the first apostles or disciples, the church has lasted down through the ages. This continuity of teachings and practices is ours today!

It is important how this section of **Living Faith** ends. It says,

'The church is in constant need of reform. In constant need of change....evolving with the times and with what we learn. The church - reformed and reforming....

General Assembly met in Waterloo last week and voted on the Human Sexuality issue. The majority of commissioners, elders and ministers, voted in favour of equality and Inclusion. This means that LGBTQI people can be ordained as elders or ministers. It also means that I can perform the weddings of gay people. This will not happen right away. For now there is no change. The report of the vote taken at General Assembly will be passed to all Presbyteries

Across the country, through what is known as The Barrier Act. Presbyteries will now vote in favour or against the motion voted on at General Assembly. At next year's General Assembly it will be decided if the vote stands or is defeated. This is part of what it means to be reformed and reforming.

Living Faith goes on to say that the church is present when the Word is preached and the sacraments administered.

I would add, that the church is present when the word is practiced. **Faith is a verb**....an action word. How can people experience the church – in other words, how can people experience God in the midst of all of life? When someone is kind, and caring, and generous to you, do you feel that God is there? When you are unselfish and do some good deed for someone else, do you feel God's presence there? When someone is ministered to with patience, kindness, compassion, forgiveness.....does that reflect God's presence?

Living Faith talks about our ability to worship and serve God in all of life. For me, being in awe at the beauty of God's creation, is a form of worship. How many of you often look out onto a corn or hay field, under a blue blue sky, and get the feeling that God has a lot to do with this and it is good. Even outside these windows. Somehow God is there. Somehow God created all of this!

Sit beside a lake and watch the herons fly past. Listen to the call of the loon. Delight as you hear fish splash as they jump for mosquitos.

One week after Pentecost, how would you say you are doing at being the church?

How are you doing when it comes to worshipping God, serving God, sharing God.....not only here, but in all of life?

When it comes to worshiping and serving God, where are you strong - places where you really feel God is at work. Can you see places where your faith is shining? It is good to identify those and to get even stronger in those areas! There is an old song that advises us to Accentuate the Positive, Eliminate the Negative, and don't mess with Mr. In Between!

Today I don't even want you to think about the negative or Mr. In Between.

Where are we strong as a congregation when it comes to worshipping and serving God in all of life? Where are you as an individual in this regard? Things like reflecting the love and grace and compassion of God into the lives of others. Being kind, generous, unselfish. Are we doing that as a congregation? Are you doing that as a child of God?

You are children of God. And you are loved. Find even more ways to share that love!

Amen