

## Individual Reflection #1 (Woody Wood)

Here are reflections on questions 1 and 2 from the Vital & Thriving Listening results analysis.

1. Tell a story about how you sense God's presence and activity in this congregation
2. Describe an experience of profound worship you have had.

A few years ago I served on a pastor-search committee at another church. Two of us visited a church in another state where one of the candidates for our pastor job was on staff, and we interviewed members of the congregation there to learn how the candidate would deal with a variety of challenges. But I soon learned that I couldn't learn about variety from that congregation. Everyone was either a life-long Episcopalian who had stayed because she/he felt comfortable in the church or a rebel Catholic who had left their birth church because of a number of standard difficulties.

Doing interviews at Trinity is nothing like that. We are a community of uncommonly diverse members. And interviews about our sense of God's presence and activity and about the worship we experience show our relationships with God and with our worship are comparably diverse.

I think this is natural and potentially powerful. San Jose is a city with two personalities. First, it is the largest city in Silicon Valley – perhaps not an intellectual center as much as San Francisco or Berkeley/Oakland, but at the center of world innovation with the diverse intellectual currents that implies. And yet San Jose is more blue-collar, too. It is the most diverse of America's 100 largest metro areas, according to Trulia. It is about one-third Hispanic and just under one-third white and Asian (which of course is a catch-all term for a huge range of cultures). It is natural and it should be a source of pride that we have diverse reactions to God and diverse ways of reaching God through our services and activities.

At the same time, this does create challenges. With so many people going in so many directions, we make it uncertain what we offer newcomers and it can be easy for newcomers to think this is just an old church doing things by rote except sometimes when it does things that are currently fashionable.

The report from the Center for Church Innovation suggests we consider whether there is a key event that would be the highlight of the church year for Trinity. I don't know that we can find a key event that will be the highlight for the diverse people of Trinity. And one important characteristic of Trinity is that it takes the whole church year seriously. Quite a few people seem to understand this, and I'd say it's working. But I wonder if we shouldn't look for some pieces or elements of our Sunday worship to highlight. So many different pieces of our worship have different powerful meanings to different people. It's easy for outsiders, especially non-Eiscopalians, to miss this in a few visits to the church and not see anything powerful going on. (I think Louise had largely missed it till she wound up on the Listening Team.) When a writer produces an article, she/he

usually has to highlight something at the center, or the reader will think she/he is experiencing a muddle. I note from the report that some people are deeply reached by the Sanctus. Is there something worth highlighting there?

Also, should we as a church be thinking about what small number of activities/programs/events outside Sunday worship can be seen as representing God's actions that we should be known for?

Just a few thoughts.

Woody Wood

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### **Individual Reflection #2 (Ned Nix)**

So, "How do we make it more comfortable to be different?"

I am reflecting today on the Trinity Listening Report. What I love about Trinity is the diversity that is evident to me every Sunday. This will certainly lead to our strength and the future of our missional church.

We will grow as the Episcopal branch of the Jesus movement embracing this diversity. We are different, and this will be appealing to Christians searching for a new home. How will we do this?

- We will work our plan by launching the pillars of the listening and discernment process that we are currently developing.
- The community needs to know who we are. We will publicize our purpose and vision for the future using Christ as our leader.
- We will acknowledge our Red, Blue and Green personality, and communicate this to our target community of Christians that want to join us.
- We will let our brothers and sisters that join us know that we are committed to the missional church, we are reflective, and we are moving forward (not backward) guided by the Holy Spirit.

Do you know what I really like about Trinity that is evident to the Vestry and Clergy but maybe not to our part-time worshipers and visitors? I like that every Sunday the liturgy is different. It seems to be a modification of Rite 1, 2 and others. It says the same thing in a different way, with prayers selected by the Presider, and the readings mapped out by the Church Calendar.

I was a consistent "8 o'clock-er" at St. Marks and I really had Rite 1 almost memorized! I love this change. There is something there for everybody! If you didn't like the week's liturgy, come again next week, you might like it.

We are moving in the right direction, team. This will be a learning experience for all who embrace this process, and I am confident it will carve the pathway to change, growth and success at Trinity.

Godspeed.

Ned Nix

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