

E Blast
September 11, 2020
From Transaction to Transformation

Let me begin by acknowledging how our world and our lives changed nineteen years ago today. The horrific events of September 11, 2001 are still very present in our memories and I invite us sometime today to stop whatever we are doing to stand or sit in silence and remember those who perished nineteen years ago and for those who have died since that bright, warm autumn morning. The country and the world have changed dramatically since September 2001 and we are still changing. We are not the same as we were then and since the beginning of COVID-19 last spring. We are being invited into something new that at the moment has not been completely revealed and yet we know intuitively that things are not the same. Human beings tend to resist any change in their lives or the culture in which we live. We see that happening at this very moment about the conversations and the marches for racial justice that are happening around the country. This resistance is nothing new and the movement to a new way of living and thinking is often messy with many twists and turns along the way. Jesus confronted resistance in his life and died as a result. The good news is that his death did not have the final say as he rose three days later. So, for us to confront changes that are happening both internally and externally, we are being invited to die to self so that new life may be born. This is hard but essential work not only for the human race but also as followers of Jesus Christ who are trying to build a church for the twenty-first century.

Last month, the Rev. Canon Martha Kirkpatrick, the canon to the ordinary, led the vestry retreat. As part of the afternoon session Canon Kirkpatrick led us in an exercise where we reviewed the difference between a transactional faith community and one that is transformational. It would be very easy to see this difference through the lens of dualistic thinking and being. That is, I choose one over the other and if I choose one then the other must be wrong. I believe that such thinking is not only harmful for the church it is also harmful in the way that we are in relationship with one another. Jesus commends us to stay at the table and in relationship with one another even when we don't agree. That does not mean we don't hold each other accountable when we see wrong in our community and the world.

What I am trying to say is that a faith community must find a way to hold in tension the transactional and transformational parts of our common life together. We can't escape the reality that there are some items in any church, including SsAM, that are transactional. The passing of an annual budget, the stewardship of our buildings and the appropriate use of our endowment are just a few examples of this transactional church. But what about transformation? How can these examples be used in such a way where the church is transformed to do the work of Jesus in the world? I invite you to reflect with me as to how might we become that transformational church at this time.

Peace,

Fr. David, OA