

A Monthly Message from Pastor Mike and Mandy

Dear Parish family,

Your pastors are asking you to join with us in a period of discernment. We expect this period of discernment to last until this January's Annual Meeting. We need your thoughts and opinions and prayers as we try to figure out in which direction God is calling us to go.

We became your pastors in 1987. That's 24 years ago. In those 24 years, we have not felt God's call to move anywhere else. Nor could we have moved, for a variety of reasons. But we could move now, if God were calling us to do so. But we don't know whether He is or not. That's why we need you to pray with us for wisdom and discernment.

Pastors do not ordinarily stay in the same parish this long. We love you dearly, and we would never want you to say "Those people wouldn't leave! They just stayed and stayed. They spent down our endowment funds. They wouldn't let someone younger come in with new ideas. They retired in place ... and that place was here!" Now is the first time that we could move and our new bishop would help us find a spot to land, but we still do not know whether God is calling us to go.

Because we have already spoken with a few of you, we need to assure you of some things: we are not in any way dissatisfied with you as parishioners or with what you are paying us. Nobody has been mean to us or hurt our feelings. We have an absolutely wonderful staff and we love each one of them. You are a wonderful congregation, and we are so amazed by your talent which you are

willing to share with the wider church. You are willing to learn and you come out in droves to the classes that we teach. You are a gift in every way. And we love our house.

But we have noticed that we have had to “take” from our congregational endowment fund in recent years. Plus, every month, there is one sweet little lady who asks loudly at 39ers, “Where is everybody?” Well, they’re dead. And we have not been able to “grow the congregation” fast enough to keep up with the dying, as you can clearly tell at the 11:00 service. Maybe a younger pastor would do a better job than we have. You certainly deserve it.

We have no intentions of retiring any time soon. We are both greying, as you can tell, but even though we are 61 and 60 years old, neither of us is on medication for anything. So far, we have enjoyed excellent health (thank God) and we figure we have 10 more good years (God willing). That’s time enough for one more parish.

So what we need for you to do is pray, think, and talk with each other. We already know that a few people are going to think that the possibility of our leaving is an unexpected gift from God. And we know a few people will think the possibility of our leaving is the end of the world. But we really do think that the majority of you will understand what we are asking for and why we are asking it.

Holy Trinity is a blessed congregation. God has blessed us with an active membership and dedicated leadership. We have been blessed with good education, music, and outreach programs.

We gather for beautiful and Spirit filled worship. Holy Trinity Church acted bravely and determinedly during the testing of last year. We remained faithful to the Gospel. Thanks be to God!

Now is a good time prayerfully to enter a discernment process that looks to the future. We know where we have been in our journey. We give thanks and praise to the Lord for the many blessings along the way. Our pilgrimage continues as the people of God in this place.

There is an ancient, well composed prayer from the Gregorian Sacramentary that expresses so well what we should remember as we begin this discernment process:

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with you most gracious favor and further us with your continual help, that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (LBW, Pew Edition, p.49)

In Christ,

Pastor Michael Tavella and Pastor Amanda Grimmer