

Growing Our Roots: Sabbatical Update, June 15, 2017

Dear Trinity,

Thank you for the warm and loving sendoff we shared with Devon, and welcome to the new space of our shared renewal.

At our annual vestry retreat in March, we were challenged to start with a single, essential question:

Why?

Why does Trinity exist, and what draws us here?

Each of you has a “Why” as unique as your own spirit, but there is also a common center of beliefs which bind us together. The Vestry made our first attempt at answering this question:

- **We embrace all people as God’s children.**
- **As Christians, we are engaged in the community and live in the world.**
- **We seek spiritual growth and deeper faith.**

These three statements are where our work begins. All of our worship, formation, and outreach programs have roots in one or more of these “Why” statements. They inform every decision the Vestry makes, so it’s important that we get them right. Please take time to read and reflect on them.

The second question the Vestry is working to answer: *What kind of church is Trinity?*

Church Size Theory is a research-based framework that describes the structure, governance, and relationship patterns of various sized churches. Working with an expert from the Episcopal Church in Minnesota, Trinity’s vestry used this framework to identify one of our biggest challenges and brightest opportunities: the transition from a Pastoral to a Program church.

In a **Pastoral Church**, the rector is at the center of church activities and relationships. A handful of families anchor the community across generations and act in leadership roles. The congregation is small enough to feel like an extended family, and for each member to personally know the priest and all (or most) other members.

In a **Program Church**, a larger congregation and staff can support a variety of activities and programs, which form a series of spiritual and social hubs, e.g., music programs, Bible study, youth ministry, community outreach. The programs intertwine and the people intermingle, but there is no single “core” group. The role of the rector is to provide administrative support and leadership for the volunteers and staff who make these programs possible. The Vestry is in close relationship with the congregation, sharing their leadership vision and responding to concerns.

This is where our challenge and opportunity lies: Trinity is a program-sized church that hasn’t fully grown into the leadership structure to support us. Devon’s Sabbatical is the perfect opportunity for us to look at what we do, how we do it, and how we lead.

Tell us: What programs do you value most at Trinity? In what ways can you offer leadership and support to Trinity? Most importantly, did we get the “Why” right?



No tree in a forest stands alone; underground, they are connected by root structures that support and feed one another. This metaphor frames our journey. Devon pauses to nurture her personal root system while Trinity, the forest, strengthens and deepens our connections to each other.