



TRINITY, ELLESMERE PORT.....

A MISSION IN PROGRESS

FEB 2020



"Life is a pilgrimage of learning, a voyage of discovery, in which our mistaken views are corrected, our distorted notions adjusted, our shallow opinions deepened and some of our vast ignorances diminished." John RW Stott (1977) Christian Mission in the Modern World



Artists: Jodie Haggart & Chloe Goodwin

I originally read the above quote during my time at Bible College in the 1980's and it has always resonated with my own personal experience and faith journey.

Having been in post at Trinity for nearly six years I thought I would share some reflection on my 'voyage of

discovery' and I will use a focus on the above art work which now adorns one of the walls at the back of Trinity to share some of this reflection.

To begin with, the biggest challenge at Trinity is keeping hold of our original intention

"I watched them painstakingly create the painting. At each stage the artists were deeply aware of the end picture"

Stephen Covey, the late motivational speaker coined the phrase, "The main thing, is to keep the main thing, the main thing". All churches at times lose focus on their prime purpose and Trinity faces the same danger.

"The church's mission is not merely to fill pews, or to build more or bigger churches, but to be the presence of Christ in the world, an effective expression of divine love and grace." (Dave Tomlinson)



Of course we are reminded that Jesus seemingly reduced all the O.T. laws in to a simple sentence:, "Love God, and love your neighbour as yourself". Love has to be the key tenet that informs our practice and so the welcome, inclusion and acceptance given to people needs to be central in all we do.

Of course, Christians were originally called "People of the Way", a people who followed the example of Jesus, who made love a way of life and were transformed from within.

How we live and love as individuals and as a church authenticates the message we seek to share. This focus has to be always before us.



Furthermore, I am aware of the immensity of God's blessing upon the ongoing work at Trinity

"The picture displays the immense catch of fish and speaks of abundance."

Trinity is blessed in so many ways in terms of the building, volunteers, in its support by the wider Methodist churches but it is also recognising our total dependence on God at the same time. God has worked and continues to work in the life of Trinity. Worship and work go hand in hand.

Also I have learnt the value of imperfection

"I was talking to a worker from HSBS bank who queried why in the painting on the wall we had left the fan duct and pipe on full view."

The above quote is an interesting observation but is actually a reminder to me that the ongoing work and mission at Trinity happens in the midst of life's imperfections – our imperfections. The kingdom of God operates in the normality and messy part of life. I guess if we wait for perfection it will never happen.



As the songwriter Leonard Cohen eloquently said, "there is a crack, a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in." (Anthem)

"Our God is a God of broken crockery, a God of shattered hearts, who despite the challenges of life, invites us to pick ourselves up and continue to move forward. And we, an ancient, broken people, we have journeyed on our way across the millennia bringing a message of hope to a broken planet. Do not despair, do not surrender, do not stop." (Anonymous)

Then I think about the challenge of inclusion

"It is interesting to reflect on the two boats and consider which boat we would have sailed in? Also, who would I want in my boat?"

So who is included in our boat? Trinity has certainly taught me the reality and challenge of inclusion particularly faced with a diversity of individuals who come through our open doors each day. The concept of inclusion inevitably challenges our prejudice and preconceived ideas, particularly as you begin to unravel their stories.



The lesson for myself is really about who do we value? We see how God assesses human value through the eyes of Jesus. Value is of course not to do with pounds or position, status or celebrity, or even religious orthodoxy, but in recognising that all are beloved.

Which perhaps leads on to the danger of impression or ‘ first impression ‘

“As we reflect on the individuals in the painting we certainly ask ourselves about their story. What led them to be in the boat?.”



Somebody once said, “If you want to change the world, change the metaphor.”

Jesus clearly changed the metaphors around people that at the time conveniently excluded them. Unfortunately, many metaphors still ring true today and Trinity is seeking to change some of those hurtful and debilitating metaphors.

As Richard Rohr says, “We ourselves create a substantial part of the image and meaning that we see-by our own expectations, needs, hurts, compulsions, infatuations, desires, and agendas.”

I have also learnt that many people carry a load that I could never imagine bearing myself. When you listen to some of the stories you become aware that rather than standing in judgment we must stand in awe at their ability to carry their load and hopefully extend compassion in the best way we can.’

Poverty of course has lots of faces and it is not just physical needs that we encounter and many come through our doors to find contact with another person having left homes that feel empty and accentuate their feelings of loneliness.

“You want to move away from whatever is tiny-spirited and judgmental, and you want to be as spacious as you can be, because God is spacious”. (Greg Boyle)

I have also certainly learnt the value of interruption

“It would seem in the painting that Jesus is turning his head to face another distraction.”

Over my time at Trinity I have learnt to realise that the interruptions are an important part of my role and not a negative distraction. In seeking to respond to people as they appear it is fulfilling an important part of the life at Trinity. People often ask me about my role and certainly a major part of my work is dealing with the interruptions of daily life at Trinity.



“My whole life I have been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted, until I discovered my interruptions were my work.” (Henri Nouwen)]

Of course Jesus was constantly being interrupted by people whether they were reaching out to him or running out of wine at a wedding. I think we do have to be in touch with the needs around us, and allow our lives to be flexible in response. It is often true that when people present themselves there is a present crisis that for them is debilitating and requires some response. The reality is that we cannot find an answer to every need but hopefully each individual is treated with respect and given a welcome. I have certainly learnt that Trinity is a continual place of interruptions but they do form the central part of the life and work as people’s needs surpass our well laid plans..

Finally I have continued to learn the value of investment in relationships

“Each brick is valuable to the whole picture and remove the bricks and you lose the picture.”



Trinity functions at best in building relationships with individuals and in partnership with other agencies who are seeking to work in the community and make a difference to people in terms of their health and wellbeing.

An agency worker who attends Wednesday Welcome shared with me last week that the work at Trinity had ‘rekindled his faith’ and that he was now reading his Bible again. He remarked that each week he looked forward to being in this community of people.

One lady who is a regular volunteer at Trinity now attends Sunday morning services but perhaps more importantly has found a spiritual home. She wrote recently, “I came to the church service almost by accident. We had a group of refugees from Iran. I was so profoundly affected by the story of their journey to be here and as a mark of respect and solidarity attended some services, explaining English along the way. Well, I’ve been here ever since. I actually enjoy coming and I can truly say that Trinity is my home from home and the people have become my family. I have become a member of the church, been baptised.”



These stories certainly are not unique and the collective narrative create a tapestry that weaves together to become a picture that displays the Spirit of God working in so many ways. Each story is different and there is certainly no uniform pattern but where love is demonstrated, God is found in a myriad of ways.

Relationships of course also continue to operate on a much more strategic level. Trinity works with a range of organisations delivering services around health and well being (e.g. Head Injury Persons Support Group, Chapter (mental health support group), Forfutures, CHAWREC, Pilates and Zumba groups, Local Community Connectors, Health & Wellbeing Co-ordinators from GP surgeries, MIND charity, etc.

A significant initiative in recent years has been the evolving project and partnership with Port Grocery which is an amazing operation requiring a high level of ongoing commitment and hard work. Trinity has sought to support and enable this initiative and partnership means in practice we do constantly need to revisit our flexibility to accommodate the growth of the need in the wider community.



So without doubt, the maintenance of our intention, gratitude of the immense blessings we have and still receive, valuing imperfection rather than seeing it as a hindrance, the danger of distorted impressions of people, the willingness to go with the flow of interruptions, and investment in relationships, are but some of the lessons that I have learnt in the post at Trinity. It is a privilege to serve the Methodist Church in this place. I thank God for this opportunity.

I continue to be grateful for the staff at Trinity; Shirley, Cheryl and Jenny, along with the volunteers that enable us to continue the ministry here in Ellesmere Port. I would also like to express thanks to the Minister, Rev. Jackie Bellfield and the Management Group that provide wise counsel and support.

I would also like to take the opportunity to express my thanks to the wider Methodist Circuit for all their support to Trinity.

Nigel Mountford (Mission Development Officer) Feb 2020



(November saw the visit of Revd Dr.Barbara Glasson as President of the Methodist Conference to Trinity)



(Wednesday Welcome continues to attract large numbers)



Please pray for the staff at Trinity: Nigel, Shirley, Cheryl and Jenny, in their daily work and particularly as they meet with vulnerable people. Pray for wisdom and strength.

Please pray for Revd. Jackie Bellfield and all the diverse work of the Ellesmere Port churches.

Please pray for all members of the Management group at Trinity who work in the background to support the ongoing mission.

Please pray for Rita, Mike and Barbara and the ongoing work of Port Grocery.

Please pray for all the volunteers who work at Trinity, Port Grocery and Wednesday Welcome.

Please pray for the finances of Trinity as we seek to meet the cost of new boilers after a recent breakdown and the ongoing maintenance expenditure of the building.

Please pray for the planned support groups for those with mental health issues and the new LGBT support group.

