



ST. ANDREW'S IN THE PINES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Sermon by Pastor Jami Anderson, December 4, 2011

Our son Tad and his wife Brenna are preparing for the birth of what appears to be a son. They have a couple more months before the expected due date, but we all know that the day or the time of the baby's arrival is never for certain.

They are eagerly waiting for this child to join their life. And while they are waiting – they are preparing. There has been a baby shower where wonderful gifts were given to them to help clothe the baby and allow the baby to have a bed and car seat and bath tub and activity games. They also are adjusting their home environment and searching for a different vehicle. They are making decisions and doing stuff together to get ready.

I tell you a bit about their preparations because it is a simple story about how we prepare for new life in this time and culture. In general we don't just sit and wait for new life, or intellectually discuss the possibilities around this new life. While we might do a bit of both of those things – we also DO many other things. We prepare. We prepare the way so we are ready to the best of our abilities, knowing that some of the future remains uncertain and will bring surprises.

I spoke last week about times of restoration, restoration that brings new life to old homes and to people's lives. Restoration takes decision making and preparation and action. During the season of Advent we are encouraged to examine how making changes or moving stuff around or doing something differently will prepare and allow us to have new life.

There is a saying amongst priest's that says, "During your first year you can't do anything wrong and during your second year you can't do anything right and during your third year you all start to work together with acceptance. Why do I say that now? Because I do think the saying points to the times of transition that goes on in all of our lives. Things change, new people come in, other people leave. There are changing gifts and talents in our midst. The needs of the community change. Our culture changes and we as a church also change. That should always be leading us to times of restoration or outright new life.

I ended the sermon last week with Bishop John Smylie's question that he asked of the Vestry – What do you see as your next step in mission – the next step God is calling you to take at St. Andrew's in the Pines?

I'd like us to take some time this Advent answering that question. This is a good season to do this. In the next few weeks the Vestry will be working on a budget to present at our Annual Meeting in January. In February the Vestry will go on retreat to discuss and make some plans

for our future during this next year. We have an opportunity now to begin preparing the answer to the Bishop's question and the new life that will bring.

He asks us about our next step in mission. As a guideline for discussing that question, I will refer back to our gospel reading of two weeks ago. The end of time, the coming of the Son of Man has come and all are being judged by the lives they have lived. The selection centers on these actions: "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

Feeding, caring, clothing, visiting – those actions are a model for us in mission and ministry. Another way I like to envision our mission uses the words of Mother Teresa of Calcutta – "Let's do something beautiful for God."

What might this look like at St. Andrew's?

Over the past year I have paid attention and listened and learned more about the community of Pinedale and the community here in this congregation. And I have asked for ideas and guidance from the Vestry. And during that time I have been jotting down ideas and possibilities of ministries that may or may not match our new life together.

I have typed those ideas on a sheet of paper I will give you this morning. Stapled to this sheet is a blank note card. This card is for your idea or vision or desire of something you'd like to see happening in this church. During this next week a bulletin board will be ready downstairs for our "Something beautiful for God" ideas. Your note cards will go up there. These are brainstorming ideas – nothing is too wild or ridiculous or impossible. Jot something down, leave it anonymous, put your card anywhere in the church. If I see a card with writing I will put it up on the board. Place them in the collection plate, slide them under the office door, hand them to me, put them on the board yourself. Let's imagine this restoration and new life to its fullest.

Let's be active and be doing as we prepare for new life at the end of the age and for the annual remembrance of the new life of Jesus the Christ in our midst.

Let us help prepare the way.
Thanks be to God.