



CATHEDRAL *of the* INCARNATION

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF LONG ISLAND



Report from the Dean of the Cathedral, the Very Rev. Dr. Michael T. Sniffen
June 9, 2019

It has been a transformative year at the Cathedral of the Incarnation. Highlights of our administrative, programming and community life included:

- Expanding our staffing configuration which now includes two administrators.
- The launch of Cathedral For Kids: worship for the young and the young at heart on Sundays at 9:15am
- The launch of Fellowship in Faith (intergenerational formation and fellowship program) Sundays at 10am
- Our programs have experienced growth in attendance and participation
- The reorientation of Cathedral Chapter: Building a board focused on developing resources for cathedral ministry
- Developing the vitality of the Executive Committee as a council of advice to the Dean and a place for strategic decision-making about all aspects of the cathedral's life and ministry.

I wish to express my gratitude to all the wardens who have served over the past 4 years for their willingness to re-envision how wardens function at the cathedral. Kathaleen, George and George have been fantastic to work with. They are faithful, able, generous and a joy to spend time with. We owe much of our successful growth to their insight and hard work.

Coming up in 2019/2020:

- The arrival of The Rev. Adam Bucko as a new Minor Canon
- The launch of the Center for Spiritual Imagination
- The launch of new contemplative worship services during the week
- A focus on choir recruiting, particularly children in local public, parochial and charter schools
- Restoration work after a lightning strike to the tower organ
- Further planning for 'Incarnation 2020' including a study for the addition of an elevator and accessible bathrooms in the cathedral

- Completion of the cathedral guest house - a 10-bedroom retreat and hospitality space on 3rd street.
- Moving forward with the cathedral re-seating project replacing the cathedral's dilapidated pews with custom-built, movable pews and cathedral chairs in the transepts.

The day of Pentecost is the culmination of our celebration of Easter as we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of Christ's promise to be with us always.

It is the Holy Spirit who empowers, enlivens and inspires our service in Christ's name as we seek to fulfill our mission as a house of prayer for Long Island.

It has been a very full year of ministry - and there will be many new opportunities and challenges in the year ahead.

I just returned from Normandy last night where I was participating in the 75th anniversary of D-Day. It was an honor to be there and the experience was full of inspiration, hope and deep appreciation for the sacrifice human beings are willing to make for the sake of others.

I spoke with many veterans who landed on Omaha and Utah beaches. Some who landed in the first wave spoke of the great unknown they encountered as they approached what they were sure was their death. On this side of 75 years many still could not understand why they were alive. Some spoke in detail about their experiences in combat - others did not.

Applause would erupt and guests would jump to their feet each time a D-Day veteran would arrive at any event or be mentioned in remarks. In bars and restaurants, they were swarmed by active duty soldiers wanting to touch them, to get their autographs and to speak to them about their experiences and what they had to share.

All of this because they have become known as liberators. Courageous heroes of selfless service. Service with a very high price, which can be witnessed in the American cemetery at Omaha.

So many fellow soldiers were buried on the beaches of Normandy and others have since died over these 75 years. There was a spiritual dimension to what I heard and witnessed in Normandy: on the part of those who served, there was an intense gratitude for being alive. Many expressed that they did not know the full implications of what we were doing at the time what it would mean -but they knew it was right, it needed to be done, and someone had to do it. It was a matter of life and death.

In France they refer to those who died in Normandy as "Morte pour la France": "died for France." However, a historian I met put the battle of Normandy in a bigger frame. He said those who died, died

for civilization. They gave themselves away for others. One monument in St. Mere Eglise says “they gave their today for our tomorrow.”

Irving Locker, one of the veterans I traveled with - a 94-year old Jewish man who landed at Utah beach, fought in the Battle of the Bulge, and went on to liberate a concentration camp - told me that his takeaway from a life of distinguished service was never stop serving. And he told me he always finds it easier to serve by focusing on today rather than yesterday. This is wisdom we can claim as a community.

In our Christian mission as a cathedral congregation - we have so many opportunities to meet the high calling of being the church today. We are invited to follow Christ in giving ourselves away, and indeed giving our church away, in service to others. To do (in the words of John Wesley) all the good we can to all the people we can in all the ways we can for as long as ever we can. To seek not so much to be consoled as to console. For it is in giving that we receive, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

We have an opportunity every day to put the needs of others before our own. The Holy Spirit gives us the grace to do this: to be the kind of church that is known for its selfless hospitality. To be the kind of church which dignifies the Christian tradition to which we belong by focusing beyond ourselves to the horizon of humanity and the whole created order with Christ-like devotion.

Asking always: Who is least, who is lost? They belong here. Who needs a word or deed of kindness, compassion and love? Let them find it here. Who is missing? We must invite them here.

The Holy Spirit is doing amazing work through us in this place. The ministry of the church is growing and deepening in so many ways. It is palpable, visible and remarkable. The Holy Spirit is instilling in us the same commitment to service that inspired many in the greatest generation 75 years ago. The Holy Spirit is calling upon us to be heroic practitioners of the faith - who are willing to put the needs of others and of the community first. And when we get it wrong to try again. This is the gift of the beloved community. When we enter this sacred place, God cheers. For we all have it within us to be heroes of the faith, to give our loves for others - to worship, connect, grow and serve with humility and love, counting not the cost.

May the spirit of the living god fill us all with gratitude this day for all that has been and all that will be. For all that has been done for us so that we might be free. The Cross is bare, the tomb is empty, Christ is risen and the Spirit is here what more could we ask for or imagine? We have everything we need to make the world a better place in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.