

A sermon by the Rev. Jack Fleming on August 21, 2011, celebrating St. Timothy's 50th Anniversary

When we kicked off our capital campaign, I jokingly referred to us as “St. Timothy's Nation” ... like “Cardinal Nation.” This morning it looks like we are both! Red, of course, is the traditional color for the Holy Spirit, whose presence has energized this good community for 50 years.

It was a young community that 50 years ago took to heart the mission of showing forth God's power through Jesus Christ. It was also a young community who 2,000 years ago embraced the mission Jesus envisioned for them ... the gospel test, though used as a proof text for primacy is really a commissioning of the whole community. It is on the foundation, the rock, of faith and risk and hope that this message found its meaning ... seed cast on healthy soil—that early charism of a whole community invested in the good news of God in Christ still alive and well in this place in our time.

Our time—St. Tim's time—begins in 1961 when a small group of Episcopalians with their first Vicar, the Rev. Bill Thomas, came together in prayer and hope to be the Rock on Mason Rd. where a new community of faith would take on the creation of a new community.

April 20, 1961

Dear Bishop Cadigan,

As of this date, the Council of the Diocese by mail ballot has given consent to a group of people living in St. Louis County to organize themselves together as a mission under the name of St. Timothy's Episcopal Church. With this approval you are now authorized under Canon II to receive the application of this mission for recognition as an organized mission. I endorse their petition.

*Cordially yours,
Charles Rehkopf, Secretary of the Council*

By mail ballot ...it would appear that we were “mailed in” so to speak. We've done better since! Not long after the first Eucharist was celebrated on this site 50 years ago to this day, in the old farmhouse, bits and pieces of which were discovered when we dug the foundation for this church, Bill Thomas wrote this, “It is difficult to predict what the future holds for St. Timothy's, but we believe that the years ahead will be exciting and meaningful ones...”

So here we are, hoping that we are that envisioned future. What do you think? We are gathered in this splendid place of worship, surrounded by beauty and light, our worship celebratory, engaging. Our community is intentionally welcoming ... we continue to broaden our vision, extend our mission ... vibrant ... hopeful ... creative. We are making a bold statement for the future ourselves as we have built this church and are not soon to build new spaces for our children and the larger communities we will be serving ... the future is now.

When we were asked as a community, as a part of the new building feasibility study, what aspects of our mission and ministry we believed to be at the heart of our response to what we believed God has in mind for us, this is what we said:
86% of us indicated that our mission of outreach and gospel-based social action in the service of others is critical to our vision, for now and for the future.
89% of us said that youth and family ministry are core priorities as we create and build—literally—for now and for the future.
73% thought that inviting new colleagues in ministry—not members as such, but rather colleagues in ministry—a major difference, was of great importance as we become ever more a center for service; a community that has impact far beyond its members.

Let me quickly note this—there are a lot of us here this morning...good! Now, think for a moment about all the people whose lives have been influenced by the active faith and ministry of St. Timothy's over these 50 years. Most remain strangers, unknown to us, but their numbers, substantial numbers, are a very real measure of the integrity of our call to serve.

Now there were many other values expressed in that study, biblical and theological formation for adults and youth for one, but everything that was reported reflected clearly that we are most certainly a mission-focused church. "Missional" is a word used these days. "Relational" is another word that describes us. Relational: we care about each other; we invite freely new folks who want their lives to have depth and meaning because they are a part of a generous and vibrant faith community. "Friends in Christ" is not a cliché here. We mean it. "Missional," it's not about us. We remember the rock from which we were hewn and the quarry from which we were dug. It's about who we are called to serve.

Paul said to his young colleague Timothy, "Don't let people dismiss you because of your youth. Be faithful to that spirit in which you were called, that is to be strong, loving, and wise in doing God's work." To the extent that we strive to be strong, loving, and wise, so will we be the community that Jesus hoped for and envisioned.

For all that has been ... thank you. For all that will be ... yes; and yes again!!
AMEN