

Note: This sermon was preached at Trinity Church only, as the two churches were having different services for Stewardship Sunday. SMWC had a 'Prayerful Discussion' rather than a sermon.

**October 17th, 2021**

**Year B; 21<sup>st</sup> Pentecost**

**Psalm 91: 9-16**

**Mark 10: 35-45**

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

During the early days of the pandemic, I found that I learned some new things about Tim. As we all faced lockdown in March and April of 2020, Tim and I, like everyone, suddenly started spending more time at home together.

The whole country, the whole world, was learning new ways to cope and survive. Tim and I got some new routines established; my working from home, routine mask wearing and use of hand sanitizer when we had to venture out, and going to the grocery store only in the early morning hours. After a few weeks these things started to be our new normal.

However, beyond the new normal, we also noticed some new habits in the other, some endearing, some, not so much.

For example: we quickly realized, with being home all the time, that our dishwasher was filling up much faster with dirty dishes, and needed to be run more frequently.

As most of you know, Tim is the cook in our household. In fact, when we got married 25 years ago, he had the nerve to draw an imaginary line with his finger along the floor of the kitchen, of the house I owned, and tell me that this was his territory. I could have been offended, except he is a great cook,

so I agreed immediately.

However, in March 2020 I came to realize, after many years of marriage, that Tim meant the kitchen was his to cook in, and to be in charge of all functions, including the dishwasher.

With us both home, I started to help load the dishwasher. First, Tim responded with suggestions over my shoulder as I put dishes in, suggestions as to how the bowls should be placed, how the glasses should be arranged. Then he stopped suggestions and started simply rearranging all the dishes I loaded after I left the kitchen.

Finally, Tim told me, after almost 30 years of knowing each other, he told me new information about him, something I never knew before.

He is an expert in loading the dishwasher, in fact, he claims he has a PhD in dishwasher loading.

We learn something new every day.

Needless to say, I have given up on offering dishwasher loading advice, what with Dr. Tim in the house. However, by April 2020, Tim had learned something new about me, that I have a PhD in organizing the Tupperware containers. But that story will wait for another sermon.

I tell this story to remind us that new things happen daily, new knowledge is gained, we learn new things about folks we have known for years!

I read an article recently from Union Seminary in Richmond, noting that the word “new” appears in the Bible almost 300 times, reminding us indeed that our God is a God of the future, pointing us not backwards, but always inviting us to see how our God is “about to do a new thing”. The writer of the article was my dear Hebrew professor at Union decades ago, Carson Brisson.

The word new is seen in so many places in the Bible: “new covenant”, “new heart”, “new song”, “new creation”, “new earth”, “new heaven”, and “new commandment”, all from our God who is continually “making all things new”.

Here at Trinity Church, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and so many changes and fears and worries, God has continued to walk with us.

And our God is indeed “making all things new”, within the “new commandment” that Jesus gave us at the Last Supper, commanding us first and always, to love one another, as Jesus has loved us, to thus share God’s love and compassion in our world.

God’s new blessings and challenges to Trinity have included the largest single gift ever received by Trinity, the donation of Hammack house to our church, just before the pandemic started.

The sale this year of Hammack House has brought our church \$234,000, which your Vestry has wisely put the bulk of into our endowments, to assure the future health of Trinity.

During the pandemic too, Trinity received a grant from the duPont Fund for \$390,000 to renovate and improve our Pavilion, allowing Trinity to become the new and expanded home of the River Road Food Pantry, now the Upper Lancaster Community Food Pantry. This grant has also allowed Trinity to have a wonderful year-round space for events, as well as being able to share

this space with the community for rent and use.

Finally, in the past year, Cheri Sheridan, and her dear dog Bunsen, frequent visitors to Trinity until their move to Connecticut this year, gave a \$12,000 gift to Trinity for building a new playground. And the Diocese awarded Trinity a \$5000 grant to build a fence for the playground. Your Vestry is making plans for building that new playground in spring 2022, a group project we will do together!

God is indeed, always, making all things new and beckoning us all, beckoning Trinity into a hopeful future, offering us so many ways to be vessels of God's love to our community, to our world.

The cover of our bulletins today says and shows so beautifully "Stewardship is Love in Action".

Indeed, the past 20 months have seen God calling us in so many ways to be love in action in our world.

With all these hopeful financial numbers I have shared today, we must not lose track of the reality that, though these financial gains will fund amazing new projects and stabilize the future of our church, none of them will fund everyday operations here at Trinity. The everyday funding is our responsibility, and we are facing a shortfall in our budget this year.

Your Vestry and I encourage each of you to read the Stewardship letter you will receive at the end of our service, and to give time for prayer and thought as to how God is calling you to give to Trinity in the coming year: offering your time, offering your talents, and offering your treasure, your financial contributions.

I am so excited to see where God calls Trinity in the new year ahead!  
Working and serving together we will hear God's fresh and new and hopeful  
calls for Trinity, following Jesus' always new commandment to love one  
another.

Amen.