

Well, Christmas came early to St. Francis. As you can see by the picture on the left, Kim Henderson and Sue Rutz confirmed the lease with A Place Like Home Daycare on Wednesday, November 28. Cathy Ostuw and I were present as well. We celebrated with sparkling cider (thanks, Cathy!)! Of course, there is a great deal of work that remains. We need to get clearance from the state that the asbestos is abated. We need to put in flooring. We need to figure out plumbing for sinks for the various rooms. And we will need to eventually install air conditioning into the building. Along with this, our tenant will be working hard painting and moving everything into the space to begin her program at 2810 as soon as possible. Thank you are in line for Kim, Sue, Cathy, and Patricia Lydon, Annette Herber, Joe Mygatt, and the former wardens of Lillian Kraemer, Betsy Adams, Brian Snover, Jim Quinn, Nancy Geary, Frank Baker, Alice Smith, and Carol Rice for ALL the work that was done in seeking a tenant, planning for contingencies, and securing our ultimate tenant. It goes without saying that "thank you" also seems so inadequate for all the work that was done. We are blessed by you all. THANK YOU!

Getting to the point of signing the lease seems appropriate as we enter the new church year and the season of Advent. Hope, longing, anticipation are themes of the Advent season. While the desire for a tenant is vastly different from the desire for the fullness of God, there exist analogs for us to explore. At the heart of it all is the recognition that, yes, God may be a large abstraction that refers to the very core longings and hopes of our humanity. AND those longings and hopes are often realized in palpable, concrete, human realities. A Place Like Home is not God. However, God meets us in the presence of A Place Like Home. Indeed, if you meet the Director of APLH, Glaucia Maruca, you might think that you have stumbled into the divine. She is a wonderful human being.

While the culmination of this over two year process seems to offer a light at the end of the tunnel, like so many things, it is one more step in the journey. Other steps need to be taken. Other issues will arise. New experiences will challenge us, threaten us, and hopefully inspire us. Thus, while Advent is a particular season with a particular time frame (December 2 - December 24). It also is a season that permeates the whole of the year and the whole of our lives.

I was acutely aware of this as I sat in other meetings on Wednesday. Inside I was so excited and thankful that the day to confirm a new tenant had come. I was also aware that everyone around me didn't know such a thing was happening, and it would probably be one of the last things on their mind. They were focused on the issues that were of concern for them. Which also raises an issue for us when we consider the various seasons of the Church year. We move in and out of the various seasons of the year--the hope of Advent, the glimpse of God-with-us at Christmas, the work of God manifest to us in Epiphany, the need for and the journey to redemption in Lent, the promise of new and transformed life in Easter, and the breath of fresh air from the Spirit of Pentecost--and we have no idea where and what the person next to us may be experiencing. One

of the connective tissues of religions is to help us get outside of ourselves and begin to see the realities of others around us.

And while it is very easy for us to connect with our own experiences of hope, anticipation, and longing, these themes cry out for us to acknowledge the world around us. Indeed, the condition of the world around us is reason for these expressions and experiences. The Thanksgiving dinner that was just had with young people who inspire and give *hope* for the future of our world. The understanding of the excitement and expectation of family or friends about to arrive and the *anticipation* it engenders. The texts or emails received from individuals entering into or continuing on a medical odyssey that makes us ever mindful of the fragility of life and the *longing* for all things to be whole. Hope. Anticipation. Longing. You know the many ways that they find expression in your life. Use this Advent to consider where they are expressed and how they are experienced in the world around you. You will be changed. And the world will be changed.

Blessings this Adventide.