



The Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

14 August 2024

Dear people of Holy Trinity Church,

"Hope is the ability to hear the melody of the future, faith is the courage to dance to it today."
[author unknown]

I regret that I cannot be with you this morning. Please know how very excited I am for you and how very proud I am of all of you as you celebrate the payoff of your church mortgage. Today is a day to celebrate that you have heard the melody of the future and have danced to the melody of faith by paying off a very significant loan amount.

It must have been at my very first visitation to Holy Trinity some nine years ago while meeting with your vestry, that we discussed your hope for your future and how to get there. I do not recall the details of that conversation, but I remember it involved finding a way to call a more permanent priest. And I remember challenging your vestry to explore with courage, creativity, and faith the ways to reduce your mortgage in order to meet your goal. And you did so in less than ten years!

Let's remember, that mortgage was also a powerful statement of great faith in 1991 to build a permanent home for your congregation. And you did build that new home! Let's remember that and celebrate it. However, we also know that some 24 years later that mortgage was beginning to restrict your hopes and dreams for a future.

Little did I know that you would take that challenge, hear the melody of hope for your future, and start to dance! And now, nine years after that initial conversation, you are gathered to make another testament of your faith, courage, and creativity as you pay off that mortgage. This is quite an accomplishment, and it is an achievement involving many people ~ from every donor to each vestry leader, from the financial acumen of Lucinda "Boo" May, to the encouragement of The Rev. Bob Graves who helped you believe in yourselves.

I hope you will take a moment, be still, look around, and let that sink in.

Once upon a time there was a man named Moses who was having a hard time believing much of anything. You know his story. And then one day while alone on a mountain, Moses saw a mysterious fire. We are told "And Moses turned aside." In that fire, to his utter amazement, Moses encountered the claim of God that freed him of his past, and the call by God into a new future.

As you gather together this morning, I urge you to "turn aside" and allow that same amazing claim to take hold of you once more. You are free of your debt. You are free of your past. Now, let us see what God may have in store for you next! I look forward to witnessing what you and the Holy Spirit will do in the future. May the fire of God's love and hope inspire you! Listen again for the melody ~ and dance!

Well done Holy Trinity!

A blue ink signature of J. Russell Kendrick, written in a cursive style. The signature is preceded by a small blue cross symbol.

The Right Reverend J. Russell Kendrick
Bishop of the Central Gulf Coast

JRK/mrp

