

Sermon: June 1, 2008
"Gimmee an AMEN, Phyllis!"

I've done a lot of reflecting lately ... on the so-called "state of the church."
I've reflected on what happened with Father Phleger ... the role of the preacher and how we handle ourselves
"from the pulpit." You know? ----- preaching is an "honor" ... a rare privilege ... whether your audience is
10,000 ... or a much humbler amount like we have on a Sunday morning.
This isn't "my church" or "your church" ... it's our shared community. Our shared ministry.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH ANYWAY?

Are we in the entertainment business??? ... just another "company" trying to stay afloat?
Is our goal to "please" everyone who comes through the door? Is it about "who is in control"???

OR

Are we the "body of Christ"???? so, when we walk out the door and go about "whatever we do" on
Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday ... when people see the way we talk and carry ourselves ... do they "see" in us a
bit *of the spirit of Jesus* coming to life??

I'm not sure how many of you have been or are involved with little league baseball or softball.

I remember, as a kid ---- playing right field ... hoping the ball would never be hit to me.

I remember being ridiculed for dropping the ball and losing the game.

I remember RECESS back in 5th and 6th grade. This is when RECESS WAS RECESS.

Softball games everyday on the playground. The two best players were captains. Everyday ... without fail ...
the last kid picked was David Duensing.

David suffered a head injury when he was younger ... now he was big and slow. He wanted so much to be a
part of a team, but no one wanted him on theirs. He was picked last, he hit last, & he played deep right field!

One day I was captain ... not sure why.

Then I did something ... almost without thinking. I picked David Duensing first. I had him play short-stop.

I had him bat first. The kids on my team were furious ----- how can we win like this????

David Duensing became "my best friend."

I didn't realize it then ... but in 1960 ... on the playground of Hawthorn Elementary School ... in Glen
Ellyn, IL ... "*Fred was born.*"

Fred is a goof. Fred plays right field ... he can also play short-stop.

Fred is picked last ... sometimes he's picked first.

Fred is you.

Fred is me.

Fred is whom Jesus talks about.

Fred is whom Jesus loves ... and whom he heals.

Fred is why the church is here.

Whether it's a wine-and-cheese party on a Saturday night ... or building a home in Riverdale, IL ...
throwing a few dollars in the love-bucket on a Sunday ... buying a Heartland rose ... a steak-fry in July ...
going to camp in June ... getting a blue frisbee on a lazy summer Sunday ...

WE ARE HERE FOR ONLY ONE REASON: *to be nourished by God's spirit ... and, in leaving here ----
to be a beacon of hope to someone else.*

Yes, we do lots of things ... but we are about one thing: *to reflect God's goodness and grace
in everything we do!!*

Last week ... it's the 10 AM service. Like she does almost every week ... Lucille brings her St. Coletta's
residents here for worship. We have seen these young men and women grow up. They may be
developmentally disabled ... but there is no label in here!@!!

They are us ... and we are "them." Our 20+ year relationship with St. Coletta's is at every heart-and-soul

of our life and ministry.

Last Sunday ... during my sermon ... we could hear a few words:

“Amen” “That’s right” “You are talkin’ to me, preacher.”

We don’t hear this too often in our humble Lutheran setting. But ----- there is no holding back Lucille!!

As Lucille and her little entourage are leaving church Sunday ... she comes up to me:
“Reverend Borling ... I’m so sorry. I’m Baptist ... and sometimes I just can’t control myself.”

The people behind her are quick to respond:

“Lucille ... don’t you ever apologize for shouting AMEN!!

We could use a little more of that around here ...”

I called Lucille on the phone this week.

“Lucille ...you and your residents are a gift ... thanks for being WHO YOU ARE!!”

When you lose your soul ...you lose the very essence of who you are.

The name on the sign matters not ----- Trinity United in Chicago, St. Michaels, Good Shepherd in Palos Heights, United Methodist, All Saints. When you lose your soul ...you lose who you are.

THE SOUL OF OUR CHURCH IS A HUMBLE CARPENTER.

He’s real. He’s human. He speaks the truth.

He’s color blind ... religion blind ... because he cuts through the gunk and reminds us about what is real ... and important ... and good.

I look at the world around us.

I think of the varied journeys ----- just inside this room.

I think of cancer & Alzheimer’s & MS ... unemployment, the price of gas, families changing.

From the struggles in China to the prejudices & tensions we face each day -----

we are the body of Christ.

We are Fred.

We are David Duensing.

We are St. Coletta’s.

We are Baptist and Lutheran --- all at the same time.

Yes, we are who we are.

We are called to be Jesus’ humble body in this world ... in a world that needs goodness, now more than ever.

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June 1, 2008

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