

Davis to leave Trinity Aurora after 11 years of service



Photo by Keith Franklin

By Brock Weir

Parishioners at Trinity Anglican church are preparing to say goodbye to long-time pastor Reverend Dawn Davis at the end of this month as she prepares to take a new position in St. Catherines.

Davis has led Trinity Anglican Church through significant changes within the church and demographic shifts through the community at large.

From the perspective of Rev. Philip Josselyn-Hamilton, Trinity's Associate Priest, Davis has steered the parish through a shift from being growth and building oriented towards a church more focused on community, spiritual growth, community outreach and growth.

"She focused on growing deeper rather than bigger," says Josselyn-Hamilton. "Part of her legacy is the spiritual formation focusing on getting people to encounter the spirit wherever and however they do that, giving broader and more diverse options, bringing in things like meditation and alternative practices of prayer that might not be originally thought of when they think of Christian spirituality. She brought in sort of a focus on prayer being less of a 'churchy' conversation and more of an experience."

Together, the two spearheaded a series of less-formal sermons with catchy titles, such as "Holy Shift," which caught the eye of Christians and non-Christians alike.

Bringing to the table a background in parish and congregational developments, Josselyn-Hamilton says Davis led the Trinity parish through some significant changes in Aurora, including demographic shifts of age, culture and ethnicity, including working across faiths to settle refugee families locally.

"Dawn has a great impact on the lives of those she touches," says parishioner Mei Zhu, who also serves the Trinity community as a

warden. ?I truly believe the ripple effect of how she impacts the lives of others goes on well beyond Aurora. She genuinely loves and cares about the people she meets. She has that magic power and tremendous energy diving into the relationship and uncovers the deep yearning of people.?

Ms. Zhu says she moved to Aurora shortly after Davis took the helm at Trinity. After ?church shopping? for a little bit with her young family, Mei says decided to become more involved in Trinity through small group discussion nights led by Davis which fostered a sense of community.

?I believe the most valuable legacy of what we can pass to our children in our lives is a spiritual legacy, a legacy of faith, which is what Dawn has been diligently working towards,? she says. ?In the past 11 years, Dawn has passionately, yet carefully cultivated an atmosphere where faith can thrive, by showing people the value and relevance of faith. This is a legacy not easily tossed aside.? Under Davis' leadership, the roof of Trinity has enabled the faiths of two communities to come together. After the devastating fire which destroyed Aurora United Church (AUC) in April 2014, Davis was one of the first faith leaders on the scene to lend a hand ? and a worship space ? to the distraught AUC community.

They have shared this space ever since and the AUC leaders are also singing the praises of their colleague.

?Although we had known Dawn as a colleague in town, our actual friendship began the day of the AUC fire,? said Revs. Andy Comar and Lorraine Newton-Comar, in an email. ?Dressed in her ?clerics' on her way to a funeral, she stood with us in the early hours of the day offering the use of Trinity Anglican Church building to gather the congregation that evening. We worshipped together that Palm Sunday and soon after we were welcomed with open, loving arms into the building where we have rented space for worship, administration and ministry groups ever since.

?Over the course of these almost four years now, we have come to deeply appreciate Dawn's commitment to us and to the AUC congregation ? supporting our plans for the future while leading Trinity in deepening the friendships we have developed in this time. We will miss Dawn as a colleague and a friend, always remembering the important role she played in our lives and in the lives of our congregational members when we were in such need.?

Josselyn-Hamilton will also miss Davis in much the same way, but over the past three years of his own time at Trinity, their bond has been forged deep. He says he is more apt to seek positions based on the mentorship opportunities they provide above most other factors and Davis has more than delivered ? on a professional and personal standpoint.

?She was one who did the work behind the scenes to pave the way for lesbian and gay marriage at Trinity Aurora, the first Anglican church in this area to have a gay marriage,? says Josselyn-Hamilton, who wed his husband Alex in the very first ceremony officiated at the Trinity. ?I didn't think I could get married in the church, at least not now. It was nice to have the support of the community, knowing that my boss was in my corner.

?Dawn identifies people's gifts and empowers people in the community and in their ministry.?