**St. David Episcopal Church**

Beanblossom, Indiana

Epiphany 4B, January 28, 2024

Sermon by the Rev. Kate Wilson

### Deuteronomy 18:15-20 **Psalm 111** 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 Mark 1:21-28

✠

*Necessity*

They say that necessity is the mother of invention. And there are times that even what may appear to be a very rigid institution will invent fresh solutions to their problems. Even an institution like the Anglican Church. We would have been Anglicans if we gathered before the Revolution, but we Americans transformed ourselves into the Episcopal Church after the Revolution. That put an end to our having to vow loyalty to the crown.

Yet the Anglican Church continued all around the world. And one bishop in Hong Kong had a very serious problem. During the 2nd war between China and Japan, an Anglican deacon named Florence Li Tim-Oi was working in Hong Kong with Chinese immigrants who had escaped the Japanese aggression. As the war continued, Deacon Florence was willing to cross behind the lines to take the Gospel and communion to Anglicans in neutral Macau. Anglican priests were banned, but apparently this courageous woman was able to go where others could not, or would not, go.

Women were unable to be priests, but Bishop Hall was the shepherd of people who needed the Gospel and the sacraments. He gave Deacon Li permission to share both Gospel and the Eucharist. Hall explained it to the Archbishop of Canterbury (William Temple) in this way:

"I have given her permission to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. If I could reach her physically I should ordain her priest rather than give her permission … I'm not an advocate for the ordination of women. I am, however, determined that no prejudices should prevent the congregations committed to my care having the sacraments of the Church."

After three more years of wartime ministry, Li met with Bishop Hall; and he ordained her as a priest on January 25, 1944.

Necessity is the mother of invention.

Li’s ministry continued in danger and denial, and I hope you might find out more about her. But the point at the moment is that necessity is the mother of invention.

Our church has a clergy shortage. The church is trying to solve it by combining parishes or having one priest covering two or more church communities with separate sites. The church is closing and selling some of the churches: that’s what happened to the church I served for four years in California, and it breaks my heart. For 50 years, people were married, baptized, and buried from that parish. People gathered and did Christ’s work. The burial ground remains there. Who knows what Silicon Valley startup will take over the rest of the grounds.

And that is indeed, sad, but the truth remains that we are short of priests.

Our bishop has found a way around my retirement to allow me to serve in this parish. Necessity is the mother of invention. I’m not too clear on how she did it, but it makes me happy. This change will not change some things at all. But it will allow us to move forward now, rather than waiting for one of the five or so candidates for about 57 jobs to choose to move to Brown County.

Quite a while ago I mentioned the four words that guide my priesthood. They came together during the years of my early discernment.

Invite, Inspire, Sanctify, and Heal.

Invite, Inspire, Sanctify, and Heal.

*Invite* people to come into community here and find ways to serve Christ together. You all make that easy!

*Inspire*, about the immediacy of the Gospel and how it works in our lives. To search for hope and light in dark times.

*Sanctify*, with forgiveness of sins and, most importantly with the sacraments of baptism and the Holy Eucharist and with marriage and burial rites, both of which are sacred, thin places where God is present.

And *heal*, to bring comfort during doubt and despair, to heal with the grace of God those things that torment us. Jesus would not tolerate the demon in a poor soul in the temple. I am no Jesus, but I invite you to meet with me, to look at those demons, to set them free.

And above all to have fun and joy throughout it all.

I am grateful to the Bishop, who saw necessity and created something new, and to our hard-working and spirit-led Search Committee for offering me this opportunity to travel with you.

We will soon move into our Annual Meeting. We will celebrate good news and begin the work of 2024. We will choose people who will be called to face necessity with the creativity of invention, and they will be up to the task.

Thanks be to God.