



The Rev. Alan Sutherland, Rector

June 28, 2009

## Pentecost 4

When I moved from Arkansas to Kentucky my daughter Rachel was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and my son James in the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

They soon made friends very quickly. One of the girls that Rachel became friends with was a girl called Lindsay. Lindsay became like another daughter to us as Rachel became like another daughter to her family. Lindsay's family lived just across our back yard. Through middle school and high school Rachel and Lindsay spent a lot of time together. They shared two homes that included meals and overnight accommodation. Lindsay came with us on vacation and Rachel went with them.

Rachel's death was devastating and it was no less devastating to Lindsay. To this day the only picture Lindsay carries in her wallet is that of Rachel.

Lindsay has been here to St. John's many times. In January of 2007 she and Seth were married here at St Johns. In April of 2004 as the daughter of the bride, she was the only bridesmaid when Judi and I were married here. I had no idea as Lindsay and Rachel grew up together that one day Lindsay really would be part of my family.

10 days ago Lindsay told us that she is pregnant and is to give birth in February of next year.

I cannot tell you what a new dimension of excitement that this has brought to our lives.

I look back with the greatest thanksgiving for all our children and now look forward to the new experience of being a grandparent and our children becoming aunts and uncles. I know we are way too young, but we are very excited about the birth of a new baby.

There is just something about children that should draw out the best in all of us. Whether we have them or not. In the gospel today we read of a father in anguish over the illness of his child. They thought she was dead but Jesus takes her hand and she awakes and they feed her.

In all of the stories of Jesus with children he is very protective and very caring of them. Jesus made it very clear that children are dependent on everything from other people. From food and clothing, housing and education. Children are 100 per cent dependent on others. I believe that Jesus called us to a special responsibility to children. Not only what we must do for our children but also what we can learn from them.

When we walk with children our stride can not be long or quick.

We have to slow down. That s a novelty for many of us isn't it. Slowing down.

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*Established in 1847*

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When we talk with children we have to be prepared for questions so we need to think about the world in which we live, what we believe about our world, the values we have about our way of living and how god is present in all of it.

From our children we should learn again a wonderful sense of innocence, acceptance, and wonder. It is not surprising that Jesus said if you do not accept the kingdom of god as a little child you shall not enter it.

What he is talking of is the childlike faith that is trusting of god, taking the time to observe the wonder of all gods' works, stopping to take in the beauty of Gods creation.

Jesus is not talking of the childish attitudes of self-centeredness and self fulfilling actions that lead us into fear, impatience, and actions that do not serve the whole of the community.

Maybe that is why Jesus used children so much as symbols of the inhabitants of the kingdom of god. Maybe we are all still learning to be children. Children of the god who created us and sustains us.

Even I am not immune to this learning.

You know people think I know everything that happens at St Johns, but I do not.

A few weeks ago you all gave me a surprise party for my 5 years of shared ministry with you at St Johns and the children gave me the beautiful stole and I thanked everybody the following Sunday. I am sure in my daze that night somebody told me about the stole but I do not remember. In eagle wings this month I learned that the stole had been bought by the children with money that they raised from memorizing bible verses. I was blown away. Astounded that our children would think so much to do that.

I cannot tell you how, for a second time, I was deeply moved. This time by the actions of our children. A response of love of which I am deeply deeply grateful. It was a response of love and we need to learn from our children. It is not the act of being loved that matters it is the act of loving that matters.

Yes Jesus talked much and did much with children, because Jesus believed that our children have much to teach us.

Amen.

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