October 23, 2009

Trinity Lutheran in Cedar Riverside and Augsburg College Campus Ministry

On October 23rd, we visited Trinity Lutheran on Cedar-Riverside. This congregation includes Anglo, African-American and African (particularly Ethiopian and Eritrean) members. When I-94 was built, Trinity lost their building. After much planning and discerning, they decided that it was an essential part of their calling to stay in the Cedar-Riverside Community and minister to the population there. Initially, they shared space with another congregation, but now they utilize Augsburg’s worship facilities and have their own office space down the block from the school. They have an after-school tutoring program which utilizes the services of college students and serves primarily African residents in the community. We learned about the history of Cedar-Riverside and the great turmoil and conflict brought about with the design of the Cedar-Riverside towers. We also heard about the great “hippie counterculture” spirit of the area (Bob Dylan was legend to have begun his career at Hard Times Café in the neighborhood). Nancy Homans, the parish Sunday School Teacher, spoke about the great diversity in her Sunday School, how the congregation has supported members going through financial and personal crisis and how the congregation has reflected on their calling to be a congregation that lives in faithful service to their community even if, at times, following such a call has meant possibly closing their congregation. Trinity both has an English speaking service and a Mekane Yesus service.
Nancy Homans speaks to us about Trinity Lutheran Congregation.
Trinity provides affordable rent to the St. Martin’s Community. St. Martin’s Table is a restaurant that serves a variety of soups and sandwiches. The waiters/waitresses are all volunteers and the tips go to supporting local and global non-profits. There is also a bookstore which has literature on various faith and social justice concerns.
Walking/praying in the rain to Augsburg College.
We arrived at Augsburg College and met Pastor David Wold.
Joanna Flaten introduced the group and explained why we were there.
Pastor Dave explains about how Augsburg College and, specifically, Augsburg Campus Ministry works to take its context in the city seriously. Some manners through which this is done include volunteering with the Campus Kitchens Project and supporting Trinity’s Wednesday Night Suppers. Augsburg College also provides Trinity rent-free space in which to hold their services. Furthermore, Augsburg’s Youth Basketball League is a program where congregations form teams which play each other throughout the season and culminate in a tournament at Augsburg. The league stresses good sportsmanship, includes prayer/devotions and allows many youth who would not normally be able to participate in other Basketball leagues to participate.
Augsburg’s Chapel Space. On the left hand side, you will notice that there is a window looking out into the community. This was deemed a “requirement” of Augsburg’s chapel space as it was being built because such a window would reflect Augsburg’s mission of looking out into the community and being a part of it.
Pastor Dave speaking to us about Augsburg.
The Cedar-Riverside Neighborhood.
We went to a local Somali restaurant where the waiter told us the recipe. We were not sure what to order, so he just said, “I’ll take care of it.” Then, he brought out multiple courses of family-style food. It was excellent!
We met these two gentlemen who told us about their lives and dreams. We were blessed by their conversation and friendliness.