



**Meditation for the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany:
The Annual Parish Meeting
January 31, 2021**

They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority [Mark 1:22]

Sunday's gospel tells the story of Jesus teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum; in the group of people gathered there is a man possessed of demons who challenge Jesus but who obey his order to leave. The story is about Jesus' authority as a teacher who faces down the defiance of demons. It is also a story about a faith community gathering to learn more about their tradition and being surprised into understanding it in an entirely new way.

Like them, we gather to worship, to pray, and to learn. We gather to celebrate in thanksgiving for the community that God is creating with us, to renew our commitment to the mission to which God has called us, to honor the people who have led you this past year and to choose leaders for the coming year.

We gather in hope: Hope based upon a long history of God's visible presence at Trinity, always guiding you on paths that were not always clear, drawing you together even when division might have seemed an easier option.

We gather with authority as the Body of Christ. We listen to the Word of God and to the needs and hopes of our neighbors. We witness to the compassionate power of God: to call out the unclean spirits that disrupt and disturb us and to free us from the complacency and resentments that stifle us.

We gather in wonder, as did Jesus' listeners in the synagogue so long ago: Our Annual Parish meeting is an act of witness to all that God is doing around us in us, and through us; the sometimes mundane business of our governance is an open-eyed and open-hearted witness to the wondrous ways in which God wakes us up.

We gather to listen, to learn, to celebrate, to promise, to witness.

We gather to worship in thanksgiving and hope.