

The Rev. Wayne Nicholson  
St. John's Episcopal Church  
6<sup>th</sup> March 2017  
Timothy Brockman Community Requiem  
First Presbyterian Church, Mount Pleasant

*[This sermon was offered at the afternoon service for the larger community at First Presbyterian Church, Mount Pleasant.]*

Pray with me.

God, this is rough. Tim is gone too young. Help us get through this. Not over it, just through it. Help us in our unbelief, in our doubt, in our grief. Help us to be mindful of your loving presence. Amen.

As you all know, and as the testimonies of flowers at Max & Emily's, signs on the Ward and the Broadway theatres, the award given him posthumously by the Chamber of Commerce on Saturday, and the admiring and grateful comments in the Morning Sun have shown, not to mention the number of people here today, Tim was so well-loved by this community. We have come together in the church he grew up in with the church that became his – a joining together of St. John's Episcopal Church and First Presbyterian and all you other churches and all of you who don't claim a church, to become one community sharing a common denominator: Love and respect for Timothy Allen Brockman.

And it's hard. It's like one long Good Friday. Dark and painful. A light has gone out in Mount Pleasant, Michigan, and it is hard for us to see beyond the darkness. But we will, yes, we will, if for no other reason than to honor Tim – his life, and his memory.

Many of you have known Tim much longer than the ten years he shared with me as his priest and friend. You will have stories to tell – later, at the reception downstairs, and for years to come. But I have one particular story, and that is about People Helping People.

St. John's, along with First Presbyterian, is in partnership with a dozen other churches in Mount Pleasant in Isabella Restoration House, a program to shelter homeless people, people who for many reasons have no home. Tim helped us out when we hosted people – he provided dinner and a radical hospitality to the stranger, the outcast.

Early on, we realized that homeless people have few choices on Sundays. Meijer doesn't really want them in the coffee shop, the Library is closed in the morning and sometimes all day due to weather or a holiday. Where should they go? Should people who are homeless have to stand around in the bitter cold of central Michigan all day until the homeless shelter opens at night?

Tim thought, "No." And then he did something about it. He opened Max & Emily's on Sunday afternoons to all who showed up, with a free sandwich and beverage and a warm place to sit. Somewhere they would feel not just sheltered, but welcomed.

It was an amazingly simple yet generous offering that has touched many of us deeply; Tim just sort of shrugged it off, "Well, it's just People Helping People." He was that kind of modest guy. And, without sounding pious, hasn't Tim done what Jesus would do? Tim just gave and

gave and gave some more – of his time, his energy, his financial resources, so that people would feel wanted. Loved.

Tim was all about hospitality. He made you feel special, like he was really glad to see you – and it wasn't for show, it was the real deal. When we first came to Mount Pleasant Harry and I were invited to share a Lions Club chicken dinner at Liz's mother's house – it's a story we always tell our friends from the coasts who ask what it's like to live in the non-coast. We came away from that dinner shaking our heads in wonder: "What about that family?!? They're *functional!* They seem to like each other! The kids talk to the adults and the adults talk to the kids and they all talk to each other! What have we gotten into?!?" Tim was the sort of person who gives "family" a good name.

He talked about Liz and his kids with such tender pride, cheered the latest Chippewa win and wore the CMU colors proudly – he was truly a man of the community. The summer concert series. People Helping People. His service on the Planning Commission. The way he encouraged new businesses downtown.

Mount Pleasant is a better place because of Tim Brockman.

Tim supported our parish, too. He served on our Vestry, our board, and for years on our finance committee, helping us to make sense of our budget so that it would support our ministries. Front pew, Pulpit side. I could look directly down at him when I preached, and I never saw him snooze. He encouraged us to think bigger, outside the box. And it was all about hospitality to the stranger.

St. John's Episcopal Church is a better place because of Tim Brockman.

And now it is time to say goodbye. To say goodbye to a friend, husband, father, brother, son, uncle, father-in-law, to a community leader who led with compassion as well as good sense. Our lives are richer because we knew Tim, because his presence in our lives made a difference.

A light has gone out in Mount Pleasant; there is a new star in the galaxy. Tim rests in God's loving embrace – he is truly with the saints. I don't know what's going on up there, or out there, but I know there's a place at the banquet just for Tim.

Thank you, Tim, for the privilege of knowing you. Thank you for your compassion and for your kindness and for the generosity you shared so abundantly.

You are already missed.

Amen.