

Our Friends in Christ,

As some know, the Mission Chapel of St. Francis and Clare in Columbia, Missouri has been subletting a storefront space in downtown Columbia, Missouri for the last eighteen months via the courtesy of Christian Fellowship Church. We have recently been informed that they will terminate their lease as of December 31, 2009. We have made an offer to take over the lease from the owners who are a subsidiary of a large national corporation, but they have been unusually difficult to communicate with via their local real estate agent in these past several weeks. We hope to know their response to our offer, which is substantially below their previous rent, but is the maximum our few members can financially manage, at the beginning of next week.

Though this time of waiting has been difficult, we are finding that it has caused us to begin our watchful, expectant waiting of Advent a few weeks early as we await the Christ Child's arrival, and hoped for intervention. As is appropriate to Advent, we are finding ourselves drawn to reflect with deep introspection upon our mission, Our relationships with others with like minds and of opposite concerns, and our personal relationship with Christ. And we are finding ourselves drawn ever nearer to Christ, individually and corporately.

There have been times of anxiety as we feared our Mission terminated as the lease is terminated, until we came to realize that our church body, our Mission Chapel and the mission God has placed within each of us, will continue whether we are able to have a storefront church in downtown Columbia, or not. We have refused to have what we have come to be told is a heartless, money-centric landlord define our existence, even while they may deny our continued presence in that particular storefront.

We have drawn nearer to Christ, with added poignancy to our Advent preparations. We have drawn nearer to Francis, as we are about to become beggars for our provision and seek to serve those who are poor in material things and

poor in the knowledge of God. There is real hunger in those who have been joining us in our Sunday Mass but most particularly in those who attend our two blessed weekday liturgies. We wish to continue feeding our brothers and sisters in Christ. We have drawn closer to each other in our vowed Franciscan Community and have come to realize that though the family we find in our Mission Chapel members may soon not have a home, we are not orphaned, but are finding ourselves thrust into the lap of our father Abba, who is holding us tenderly and closely.

And so we prepare our hearts during this Advent season, with watchful expectant waiting...and joy.

Submitted in obedience, Sr. Toni Almond December 5, 2009