

Pentecost 6B – Lectionary 13 06/30/2024

The last time I was here, 2 weeks ago, I announced that I would not be putting my name in as a candidate for your next pastor. Pam is no longer working here, and Connie finished her time with us. Everyone take a deep breath.

This is a lot to process all at one time. We hear in the Bible that God never gives us more than we can handle, but really? People leaving involves grief and so often we choose not to talk about it. Yet, in order to move forward eventually as human beings, in order to bring health and stability back into balance, we do need to at least acknowledge it.

Grief is real and yet slippery as everyone experiences it differently and this includes groups. I am wondering if part of the struggle of grief is that it involves change. When we acknowledge it, it means we have to do something different to fill the holes that need to be filled and then a new plan developed in order to move forward.

Our leadership has been working on this. To fill the Administrative Assistant/Secretary position we began posting this job soon after Connie announced her pending departure. We have updated the job description and responsibilities. It also gives us time to ask the question whether the hours were enough to do the job as well as other challenges that Connie had. Thank you to the volunteers who have stepped up to assist us in the office and temporarily fill this hole. When the E-News came through on Friday, I was thankful, and I did like how it was done Randy.

I will be meeting with John McCrackin regarding VBS. Yes, there were preparations in progress, and now we will develop a plan to continue those preparations. We are hoping others will step forward to assist us in providing this ministry for our children. St. Paul's in East Lansing is joining us this year and we are inviting the community children also.

Through all of this grief, this leaving, all different feelings are produced, such as anger and anxiety. This is all transition or liminal space. A space where we can't see what is ahead and are called to refocus or recenter and deal with what is in front of us now. It calls us to turn to God and believe that God is faithful and hasn't just left us with a flat tire and says I'll just watch how you do with this time in the life of your community of faith.

Some of the leave taking may have been in the back of your mind for a while, other leave taking may have seemed abrupt and not planned on. Whether we like to hear it and I don't always like to, God allows things to happen in God's

time. Then I believe God says to us are you going to turn to me or try and do this all on your own. As Christians, of course we know in our hearts that we need to turn to God in Jesus Christ. As human beings though, we would like to do it our own way.

This is the history of God's people. Twice in the Old Testament we hear of God's people being in exile as they tried to figure it out on their own. In our first reading for today we hear from the prophet Jeremiah reminding the Hebrew people that God is faithful. He probably wrote these lamentations right before God's people were exiled to Babylon.

I turn to our first reading today to remind us that God is faithful and that we can depend on God. This is also part of the history of God's people that God never left them. God sent people such as Jeremiah and so many others to first of all say that God would be with them and then we can see throughout all of history that this was true. Second of all to remind the Hebrew people as we ourselves that God continually waits for us to say hey God, we have a flat tire, can you please give us some guidance?

Jeremiah writes to the Hebrew people and tells them that God's steadfast love never ends and neither does God's mercy. This is often difficult to hear in the midst of transition and change. This is the kind of ministry that I have been doing and where I am at in my life. Grief and leave taking is tiring and involves change.

Jeremiah in this passage says that one should wait quietly. Most of us do not do well at this. I am always planning ahead. I have also learned that planning too far ahead does not always work. God may be telling all of us to take time to breathe and be quiet. Give all of our anger and anxiety to God. Directing it at people is the easy thing to do. Sometimes giving it to God is the hard thing to do.

God has a plan for Faith Lutheran Church. I will continue to say this until I leave, and that date is not on the calendar yet. What I have learned is that sometimes God is waiting for certain things to happen before one can see a little further into the future.

Jeremiah says that God does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone, but I believe God allows things to happen in order for us to depend more on God. So, through this time of grief/leave taking when we feel anger or anxiety, ask yourself, what is it that I don't like about this situation? Is my anger directed at a person? Is my anger toward this person helping me or the situation? Are we able to put it in the form of an "I" statement? First tell God when you feel angry and then ask God what to do with this anger. Holding on to anger is a health hazard. Anger is a real emotion and needs to be expressed in the healthiest way possible.

When we feel anxiety it is often because we feel that we no longer have control. We do know that we don't have control over people or situations, but we like to think that we do. Not knowing the future creates anxiety if we are trying to see through our eyes, this is when we can easily feel helpless.

It is when we look toward the future through God's eyes our anxiety level can go down as we are not relying on ourselves. God in Jesus Christ says to us look at what you see in front of you, deal with that today. Jeremiah reminds us that God is faithful, God's steadfast love and mercy never end. It is when we give our anger and anxiety over to God in Jesus Christ that we will be able to see God's new mercies every day. It is when we have those flat tires and choose to turn to God in Jesus Christ for guidance.

God will provide for Faith Lutheran Church what is needed at the time it is needed, but it may not look like what we expected. That is when in faith we say:

Great is thy faithfulness, Great is thy faithfulness!

Morning by morning; new mercies I see;

All I have needed thy hand hath provided;

Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto thee.

Let us pray: Gracious God we thank you for your faithfulness. When we have those flat tires in life, may your Holy Spirit point us to you. You know we would like to figure it out on our own, but we have seen through history and in our own lives that this does not work. Today we hold on to your promise that Jeremiah reminded us of, you are faithful and your steadfast love and mercies never end. We turn our anger and anxiety over to you and ask for your guidance during this time of transition. In Jesus name'. Amen