



Pioneer Pastoral Charge
Sunday May 17, 2020
Easter 6 God's not in a box
Rev. Helen Reed, Diaconal Minister

Candle Lighting: *The light of Christ... God around us,
among us, within us.*

Call to Worship

We gather in the presence of
the One who shows us the way.

The way of the Christ is love

We gather in thanksgiving for
the One who teaches the truth:

**that we were all made in God's image
and called good**

We gather to hear the One
who guides us through life.

**We are ready to listen
for God's love today.**

Amen.

αHymn: ♪ MV#44 Shadow and Substance

Scripture is our song for the journey,
the living word passed on
from generation to generation to guide and inspire.

**God calls us to be doers of the word
and not hearers only.**

Acts 17:22-31 The Inclusive Bible

²² Paul stood up before the Council on Areopagus and said, “Citizens of Athens, I see that in every respect you are scrupulously religious. ²³ As I walked about looking at your shrines, I even discovered an altar inscribed: ‘To an unknown God.’ Now, what you are worshiping in ignorance I intend to make known to you.

²⁴ For the God who made the world and all that is in it, The Sovereign of heaven and earth, doesn’t live in sanctuaries made by human hands. ²⁵ and isn’t served by humans as though in need of anything. No! God is the One who gives everyone life, breath, -- everything. ²⁶From one person, God created all of humankind to inhabit the entire earth, and set the time for each nation to exist and the exact place where each nation should dwell. ²⁷ God did this so that human beings would seek, reach out for, and perhaps find the One who is not really far from any of us -- ²⁸ the One in whom we live and move and have our being. As one of your poets has put it, ‘We too are God’s children.’



²⁹ “If we are in fact children of God, then it’s inexcusable to think that the Divine Nature is like an

image of gold, silver or stone – an image formed by the art and thought of mortals.

³⁰ God, who overlooked such ignorance in the past, now commands all people everywhere to reform their lives. ³¹ For a day has been set when the whole world will be judged with justice. And this judge, who is a human being, has already been appointed. God has given proof of all of this by raising this judge from the dead.”

Prayer for Grace:

Holy One,

We find ourselves in a time of our world life when we cannot be in the buildings that we have thought have been where you are best found.

But we have realized, as Paul said many years ago, that you are not held within the four walls of boxes or buildings.

Our stories tell us that you are
the author of all creation

We have not remembered your gift to us.

You have encouraged us to reach out to you for
wisdom, courage and in faith.

**We have often chosen
to move ahead without you,
focussing on our needs,
not looking for your loving guidance.**

Forgive us God.

Open our hearts a little bit wider.

**Help us to open up the boxes
that we have tried to put you in.**

**Help us to see your presence in
your world and the people around us.
Give us the courage to change our lives to be
your love in the world. Amen.**

Words of Assurance

Through our faith stories,
we hear God gently guiding us
to see and be love in the world.

Through our faith stories

We see our God first making the sacrifices
that we are invited to do.

God is always with us in life
loving us, guiding us.

Know that God is around us, among us, within us.

Know that God loves us all ways and always.

Thanks be to God.

John 14:15-17 The Inclusive Bible

¹⁵“If you love me, and obey the command I give you, ¹⁶I will ask the One who sent me to give you another Advocate, another Helper to be with you always -- ¹⁷The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept since the world neither sees her nor recognizes her; but you can recognize the Spirit because she remains with you and will be within you.



Message/Reflections ***“God is not in a box”***

So many times, what we are experiencing in life influences how we see the world around us. Our particular life journey highlights things for us that others may miss or perhaps it's the other way around.

As I read the scriptures for this weeks worship I was reminded to take time to listen, to be aware of the Holy in unexpected places, and to truly listen for the Holy guiding me through this maze we call life.

Jesus words are found in the time before those last days before the crucifixion when Jesus tried to prepare the disciples for life being turned upside down. The Jesus moment we hear today was one where Jesus was seen trying to hold himself together, bracing for the storm that was to come but also offering solace and assurance to the disciples. The disciples needed to hear hope and assurance that they would survive the fierce storm. We know that they did but that life was never the same as it had been.

John's Gospel was written in an age of fear. It was written for people surrounded by agents of the emperor, who lived in imposed dominion and experienced the terror of weapons used to enforce imperial power.

Jesus used this moment to teach the disciples that it is love that brings life to relationships, that it is truth that would guide them forward into their unknown. Not violence, not what the empire told them to do, but what love guided them to do.

He wanted them to remember in the days ahead his command to focus on others as he had done: to feed the hungry, be with the despised, look after the sick, be the voice of welcome for all genders and people. He assured them that, with faith, they would be strong enough to live through this and that they would know God's spirit moving with them, encouraging them.

In a chaotic and dangerous life, Jesus reminded them that God was with them. Not hiding or stuck in a synagogue but right there with them. In the middle of the chaos, God was the peace, God was the direction.

Years later, as Paul lived out his call to share the message of Good News and God's love we see again that God cannot be neatly packaged up to be used as necessary. After being run out of countries who didn't like what he told them, Paul found himself in Athens. He was invited to speak to a group of people in this place of learning, philosophy and religious curiosity. He considered who he was talking to and changed how he presented his message. Instead of berating people for worshipping many Gods, he said... let me introduce

you to this one. The God that he spoke of would not be slotted into one task...not for wind or rain or love or war. The God that he spoke of was not to be fashioned into something of their imagination.

This God was one with everyone. This God was the beginning and ending of all life. This God loved all people as though they were treasured family. Paul created relationship ties with this previously 'unknown' God so that the people would see the possibilities of meeting and being this God in their everyday life.

Paul taught the Athenians that God, the Holy, was with them in every aspect of their life, not just tucked away in a small piece of life. He introduced them to a God that, as a child would trust in the guidance of adults, they could trust to guide them.

Today we might find ourselves, like the disciples, in a place and time of chaos. Every time we turn around the world is changing, barriers are being thrown up around us, we feel as though we are being told what to do all the time. It is scary and frustrating. We don't have the opportunity to lock ourselves in a room with our friends to figure a way out of this. There are times when we don't even know what we are fighting, because our danger is not blatant like Rome was, it is insidious and sneaky but no less dangerous.

Where do we find God in this? Jesus said: The Spirit of Truth will be with you. God's truth and love is in us. The ability to listen and hear the truth from the Holy will accompany us. It won't hide in corners it will travel with us. The truth of our faith tells us that, in chaos, our task is to love others, to care for others, to open the boxes of faith and pour God out into the world.

Paul tells us to stop trying to box God in. That God surrounds us, accompanies us. That God was there at the beginning of time and will be there at the end. God knows us and loves us and will always be within reach. Paul tells us to stop trying to make God what we want God to be. Paul tells us that God will mold us, move us into the love we are meant to be.

In this chaotic time, I invite us to see where God has broken loose from the boxes of our church walls into the world around us. Where is God meeting us on this journey?

Is God inviting us in to stop focussing on ourselves and to look after others? To make decisions not by what we want, but what others need? To Love our Neighbours as Jesus loved us?

Is God moving through others right in front of our faces and we don't notice? Can we slow down and see the truth of God's care and love as we are gifted with baking from our neighbours; as we

realize that what we have in life is not as important as who we have in life; as we cherish connections and freedoms that we once took for granted; as we find ourselves pushed into choosing to help others instead of helping ourselves.

We can't tie God down and God won't tie us down. Let the Spirit of truth and faith and love free us to be the givers of life for all of God's children and all of God's world.

Offering Invitation

As Jesus taught the disciples, attempting to give them the courage and strength for the challenges ahead, he reminded them of the command he had given them: "That they love one another as he had loved them"

Then he said that God's spirit of truth would remind them often of the right time and places to do that. The truth is that the world needs a lot of love right now and that we are to love as much as we can. What can you offer to God's church today, that will help break down barriers and keep the work of the church alive in the world?

œHymn: ♪ VU#368 Holy Spirit, Truth Divine (vs1-3)

Prayer of God's People for God's People:

Holy God,

We offer you our gifts, small and large, so that they may be combined with your love and direction to support your people and your world.

You remind us that your spirit cannot be confined to small places, that the whole world is yours and ours to share and care for.

We give thanks for those leaders of the world who remind us that you call us to care for each other. We pray that they will continue to hear your voice reminding them to offer love and care for all of your people.

We pray that we will find the courage to support generous caring for all.

We give thanks for all those people who share with us your spirit of Truth.

We pray for them as they prepare us for the challenges ahead

We pray for humility to accept unwelcome truths to offer unrestrained welcome

We pray for a world that needs to be reminded to see the good in life,
to see the need of others,
to remember that we are family together

We pray for the people and places in the world
who are broken, who are scared
who feel vulnerable

We pray for the hungry, the homeless
the hurting, the heartbroken.

**God of all compassion, we ask that your love
surround all those in need.**

**God, we pray for ourselves
that you would give us strength and courage
to be your love in the world.**

**We pray that we will be inspired by faith
to give thanks often
for the gifts we are surrounded with.**

**We ask all of this in the name of the One who
taught us how to love with all that we are
for all that you are. Amen.**

∞Blessing

Let us go out into God's world
keeping our hearts and eyes open
for ways to be God's love in the world.
Let us offer as much care as we need.
Let us offer as much love as we yearn for.
May the ever present love of God,
the teaching and guidance of the Christ
and the power of the Spirit of God's truth
be with us as we go.

Changing the Christ Candle:

The light of Christ, shining into all the corners of the earth, showing us where we are and where we are meant to be. The Spirit of God. Breathe it in...and know that God is with us wherever we go.

🎵 Hymn: MV#147 God, Help Us To Treasure

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Ways to share your offering:

We aren't meeting every week as we used to, but the work of the church continues with weekly online worship, weekly Tea Time Online, the provision of Pastoral Care. Our buildings still need a bit of TLC and heat.

Please continue to sent your financial support to the church. It's great to know you are thinking of us as much as we are thinking of you☺

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