

Sermon by the Reverend Dr. Paula Sampson

February 27, 2023

Celebration of New Ministry Eucharist commemorating the Feast Day of Welsh poet and priest, George Herbert (April 3, 1593 - March 1, 1633). During the liturgy, Bishop John Stephens installed the Reverend Joyce Parry-Moore, Vicar of the Parish of St. Aidan and St. Batholomew (St. Bart's) in Gibsons, BC.

Because today we celebrate not only a new ministry but also commemorate the historic ministry of George Herbert, I chose a few lines from Herbert's "A Prayer before Sermon."
"Blessed be the God of Heaven and Earth! Bless the people here assembled and make your word a swift word, passing from the ear to the heart, from the heart to the life, that, as the rain returns not empty, so neither may your word, but accomplish that for which it is given. We ask in Christ's name." Amen.

I am so pleased to provide the sermon for this celebration. Not only is it an honour to share parish, deanery and diocesan happiness but it also adds another link to a chain of personal connection. Joyce and I met 18 years ago at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Juneau, Alaska. Ian and I shared an interim position there. Joyce was beginning her discernment process. Holy Trinity was where my discernment and ordination process had taken place, so already we had a connection which soon deepened. Eventually Ian and I returned to BC and our work in the Nass Valley. As Joyce's process continued, she and I kept in touch as she wended her way through the ups and downs of postulancy, among other significant challenges. By the time I began teaching at VST in 2009, the two of us had another connection: educations from the same

seminary in Berkeley. But then our active connection sort of “hibernated” as we each went about our own lives. Hibernated, that is, UNTIL in December the diocese reported that Gibsons was receiving a new vicar and the diocese a Missioner for Climate Justice. Could this be the same Joyce? With a distinctive name, an operatic background and mention of Alaska, it had to be. It was!

We quickly reawakened our friendship, marveling that we found ourselves once more not only in the same country, but in the same diocese, living almost next door to each other. (It’s only ONE ferry between here and Powell River!) We’re ready to expand our connections now around shared concerns for climate and Indigenous justice.

Which just goes to show that a hibernating connection is not broken. It is waiting. Waiting to be shaped, as described in Jeremiah. “. . . before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations. . . I have put my words in your mouth.”

Waiting. Waiting to be named, as described in the letter to the Ephesians. “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ”

Waiting. Waiting to be incarnated and empowered as described in the passage from Jesus’ farewell discourse in John. “Love one another as I have loved you. . . . I have called you friends because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. . . . I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.”

Today we celebrate the shaping, the naming, and the empowerment of many new connections. As this parish has been in operation since 1892, ministry here isn’t exactly new, but now you have a new ministry partner to participate with you in this work. Connections between you and

Joyce have already begun. They take concrete shape in the symbols you are about to present to her and in the response she will make to you. Listen for some of the many words of connection that link you and Joyce through this liturgy and on into your life together: invite, join, welcome, share, nurture, reconcile, heal, encourage, pray, worship.

And across the diocese, too, with its most welcome and needed climate emergency ministry, connections will form as Joyce brings her expertise, energy and imagination to the task.

\All these links are exactly how we will continue to “. . . find joy together in the service of Christ.”

Believe it or not, Spring is arriving on the Sunshine Coast, and many plant and animal beings are trading hibernation for emerging activity. As they make their new connections with the creation communities of which they are a part, let us all do the same. What are we waiting for?!

We close with Herbert’s “A Prayer After Sermon.” Let his words be ours: “Blessed be God who continues to pour benefits upon us. You have given us the blessings of life. May our obedience reach the measure of your love. To whom with you and the Holy Ghost, three Persons but one most glorious, incomprehensible God, be ascribed all Honour and Glory and Praise [for]ever.

Amen”