

Second Sunday after Pentecost June 18th 2017

We are followers of Jesus

A reflection by Peggy Jensen

Prayer: Jesus, you have invited us to follow you. You have shown us love and grace. Guide us now to put your teachings into action. Guide us to use our Mission statement as we continue this ministry. May the thoughts and words that we share be your word for us today. Amen

Sarah laughed! Wouldn't you laugh too if someone suggested that you were able to do something someone 60 years younger than you might find a challenge. Sarah, at her old barren age, heard the rumour that she was going to start bearing children. Of course she laughed, so would I!! or cry! Genesis 18: 1-15

The truth is that God's imagination sees past our limitations. God offers us opportunities beyond our imagining. When we trust God to help us find the endurance, the patience the capability to do God's will, miracles can happen.

Who me, a minister? It is one of those miracles!! I never imagined that I could have 17 years of active ministry for the church. I didn't laugh when I felt the call but I certainly felt inadequate. I am not an academic so I still am amazed that I completed my Master of Divinity degree. It wasn't me! I am so grateful that my faith in God and God's grace has blessed me with opportunities well past my imagination.

Now look at what we have accomplished in less than 2 years working together. God has guided us here and you have been responsive to the invitation to become shared ministry. The Mission Statement you created may not be perfect but I believe it is a powerful message.

*We are followers of Jesus, Worshipping and Serving with love and joy
We open our minds, hearts, and doors to the world.*

The gospel reading tells the story of Jesus commissioning his disciples to carry out his ministry. The divine mission Christ gives is to be applied to this world, with its political reality, its social divisions and its systemic disorder. Despite the challenges, despite the questionable likelihood of success, despite our inevitable difficulty in accomplishing what he could do far more easily than we, Christ confidently sends us out! Jesus sends you and me out to do this work. The work starts here in this community of faith and here on Gabriola, as you follow Jesus the Christ.

Jesus said to his disciples, Matthew 10:3 “ *the harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.* ”.

You know the numbers of labourers are few but together you are much stronger than you were separately. You have more resources together. There are many opportunities for you to continue this work. On the Transition Team evaluation forms there was a space to write in “what more needs to be done”? You shared many great ideas:

Fellowship activities together: Guess who's coming to dinner? Strawberry tea..

Pastoral Care ...

First Nations information...

Follow-up on Palestine and Israel

More outreach less talking

Worshipping and serving with love and joy.....

Weekly worship nurtures your spirit and encourages you for the week ahead.

Putting your faith into action, whatever service you offer, do it with love and joy.

We open our minds, our hearts and doors to the world....

Find new ways of doing this. Abundant resources from both denominations to keep you active in this ministry.

Following Jesus is not easy. It can be quite challenging at times. The reading from Romans 5:1-8 is so relevant to where we are today.

1. *We are justified by faith.* Faith keeps us on the right track. I like the justification on the computer; one button and everything is lined up to the left .All in order ---right relationship.
2. *We boast in our suffering-----* this does not mean highlighting your moaning groaning medical history! In every life experience there is some suffering --- (what is the saying-- or it wouldn't be worth working for?)

One example is our own recent experience-- Everyone of us knows that there have been long hours of discussion, disagreements and delays as we have suffered through the final shared ministry agreement.

Paul's words (Romans 5: 3-5) are certainly not meant to celebrate our experience of suffering. However, when we do suffer, we are not nor do we need to be defeated. Paul explains that the experience of suffering can bring persons through a series of results. As we stand in the grounding of our faith, and go through trials and tribulations, our suffering can produce endurance, the ability to be strengthened to keep going as we take each step forward. When we have endured with patience, the endurance produces a strengthened character, and this character can move us toward a stronger hope. Our hope is fruitful because it is hope in God, in whom we have our faith.

I am sure you have your own examples of suffering, endurance, patience and blessings. We can even look back at what Sarah was laughing about! Abraham and Sarah are literary characters who endured adversity, heartache, and difficulties before they received the result of God's promise to them.

We are part of God's family, blessed by God, we have hope and peace and the great treasure of God's grace. These are not blessings that we need to earn or suffer for. These are the spirit given gifts. You are surrounded by God's grace and love.

By the grace of God, you are empowered to carry on God's work as followers of Jesus, to worship and serve with love and JOY . May it be so Amen.