

Sunday May 7th, 2017 4th of Easter

A Community of Faith

A Reflection by Peggy Jensen

Based on Acts 2: 42-47 *The believers share everything in common....*

Gracious and loving God, as we pause to ponder what the words of scripture mean for us today, open our minds and hearts. We have heard the story of the early church and compare it to this community of faith. Help us to see the rich connection that we have through the work of the Spirit. Guide us as we continue to discern you will for this community of faith. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

The reading from Acts is the perfect scripture for you to hear today as you make important decisions about the future. Acts offers a wonderful vision of a community committed to mutual support – a group gathered in one heart and one soul in which no one claimed private ownership of any possessions. Everything was held in common.

This is the day that each congregation approves the co-ownership agreement that does just as the story says. The pooling of resources for the benefit of everyone. This is a wonderful commitment to becoming one community of faith. In February and March you did the hard work of discerning a new way to be together. When you approved the Shared Ministry agreement you committed yourselves to this new congregation. Today is just the next step in co-ownership. I think it is very helpful that both the Diocese and Presbytery have given us their support and encouragement for this Shared Ministry. This has been faithful work by a few folk who have filled and revised forms many times, they have felt your support and encouragement too.

The other document on the Agenda is the Ministry Profile, a snapshot of who you are as a community of faith. So this picture of the early church in the Acts reading shows some similarities.

You can imagine how exciting it was for the early church, hearing the apostle's stories first hand then sharing the good news with many others. The birth of the church then was the divine work of the Spirit, touching people's lives and bringing them together. It was amazing to see the how the church grew. There were four practices mentioned that helped develop the faith in the early church. These four practices are the key elements that will help each of you to grow.

“They devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and to their prayers.” Acts 2: 42-47

We are all called to read the scriptures and share our understanding of them. To see how they guide our everyday lives. Devotion to fellowship and friendship means nurturing the habits of hospitality. Greeting each other in the name of Christ is important, speaking to a stranger, a visitor or a neighbour you have known for years. You know how valuable a warm welcome is when people come to church, then continuing the connection during and after worship is also such an important piece of building community. We have had a lot of meetings but sharing food and conversation makes meetings a piece of cake. I hope you really enjoy lunch today!

The reference to “Breaking bread together” seems to allude to the Lord’s supper, faith and community fed by the sacrament. Sharing communion has become a significant piece of our worship together. I know that it will take a few minutes more to share communion today but on really important days we pause to remember what Christ has given us to remember him by. It affirms our unity with Christ. Communion today is a blessing as we continue to strengthen our commitment to this shared ministry. And they prayed together. A mark of sincerity and vitality in a congregation is their involvement in prayer. Here the people who pray on our behalf, every Sunday, is a remarkable witness to this community. The prayer circle weaves this congregation together as you care for one another. The power of prayer does far more than we ever realize. The community of faith that prays together and prays for one another will be strong.

You are doing all the important practices that guided the early church. This is an amazing community of faith. I like to call you that, **a community of faith!** You have come so far since I first met you. I hope you are as excited about the progress as I am. We have a lot to celebrate as we finish this work. You and I know that it is by God’s grace and the presence of the Spirit, that you have been able to make decisions and create these important documents. You are called to this time and place to continue God’s work. God is and always will be with you. Thanks be to God. Amen