

TMUC – Worship from Home

Reflection – June 14, 2020

Summer in Manitoba is almost here!

For many, the arrival of summer has some very seasonal rituals. For some, it is camping, or cottaging, or travelling. For some, it is attending festivals, or visiting on a balcony, deck, patio, or park -- relishing the sound of the birds, or gardening, or bar-b-queing, or 'projects', and that is just naming a few. What is special for you at this time of year?

For many of us, spring and summer are a time to be out and about!

The Gospel of Matthew has a message for being out and about. *'As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'*

A version of the scriptures, called The Message, paraphrases the next words of Jesus like this:

Go to the lost, confused people right here in the neighborhood. Tell them that the kingdom is here. Bring health to the sick. Raise the dead. Touch the untouchables. Kick out the demons. You have been treated generously, so live generously.

It seems odd to reflect on being out and about when the pandemic has had us home and alone for months. The health message has been, don't go out, don't touch and yet the church's mandate seems the opposite. How are we to respect the health directives and to still be the church in this COVID time?

Rev. Trish Elliot wrote an article in the most recent issue of Broadview.

The Church has always been on the front line of human suffering, with a skill set honed over 2,000 years to support families grappling with tragedy, to help ease the fallout of economic uncertainty and to set up the infrastructure for community care. The church is also uniquely positioned to address the wider issue of inequality and skewed values the pandemic laid bare.

COVID-19 has forced everyone to take stock of wants verses needs. With nowhere to go, we have had to slow down and consider the things we take for granted.

I think that not only do we have time to consider the things we have taken for granted, but we can consider the people that we have taken for granted. Can we consider the systemic racism in our society?

In part that is why the protesters are out and about right now.

Can this pandemic and all the protests help us to realize that the community is viable only when all people are included. We need every person, we need every skill, and every person and every skill should call forth our respect, our gratitude, and our generosity. That is true in our community, and that is true around the globe.

And, any thought that some lives are worth less than others is a thought that is unjust and unfaithful to the Gospel. And, that is a demon that we can kick out.

The world needs healing. #BlackLivesMatter. We cannot continue as if time can turn back. This is a time for systemic change. We need the eyes to see that the kingdom of God is here if we let it be here.

We need to listen to voices that have been silenced.

Being out and about as a church will bring us new encounters. And new encounters will give a gift to us.

We need to change. And we need to stay the same.

We are and will be the church proclaiming God's love.

The Indian novelist, Arundhati Roy wrote an essay for the Financial Times. She equates the pandemic to a portal.

Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.

We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.

Trish Elliot ends her reflection with:

In some ways, we are as we always were: Disciples of Jesus. The call to follow Jesus' way of justice and love is eternal and unchanging: Society hungers for those values now. The "what" hasn't changed. The task before us is to figure out the "how". Thankfully. We've been blessed with each other to work it out.

May God be with us as we are out and about living the gospel and changing the world.

Amen.