



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

The Holy Trinity First Sunday after Pentecost June 11, 2017

Pentecost 2017: Encourage The God We Serve Matthew 28:16-20

So, again, "In the name of the Father (Creator of all life, and of the Son (Redeemer whose forgiveness touches us with new life, and of the Holy Spirit (who gives us courage to witness and to serve). Amen."

On these Sundays in June, we are marking a very clear focus on our mission through the ministries we share in the world.

Last Sunday, on the Day of Pentecost, as today, we GATHER on the Lord's Day. On Sunday last, we gathered to share the Affirmation of Baptism (aka Rite of Confirmation) for five of our students. They were reminded of their Baptisms, cocooned in love, as they made confession of their Faith and the promise to walk faithfully in the Lord. Then, we promised to ENCOURAGE them. Remember the question? "People of God, do you promise to support these sisters and brothers and pray for them in their life in Christ?" And we said: "We do, and we ask God to help and guide us."

What does it mean to encourage? How do you/how do we GIVE SUPPORT, CONFIDENCE, HOPE, HEARTEN, CHEER, BOY-UP, UPLIFT, INSPIRE, MOTIVATE, SPUR ON, STIR UP, FIRE UP, STIMULATE, INVIGORATE, VITALIZE, RALLY, FOSTER, NURTURE, STRENGTHEN, CULTIVATE...get the picture, words which speak to relationships of encouragement. Which become a sure foundation for COURAGE as we are becoming disciple-FIT!

Our Readings illustrate the fruit of the word:

- Jeremiah is encouraged in his calling to be a prophet. Imagine being called to go to the nations to speak God's truth. How would you respond if you heard the call today at worship? "Show me the job description, get back to you, I am too young/too old/too busy, ask someone else." Imagine it!

Jeremiah pulled the "Too Young Card." The LORD hears, responds and gives encouragement through Empowerment ---"I appointed you," "I am with you," "my words are in your mouth." And he would lead the people of God into Exile but remembered the promise that after judgment, consequences for sin and forgetting the covenant, that he would go on "to build and to plant."

- Paul encourages a congregation which could have become a nightmare of chaos. Having planted the congregation in what we might consider a busy urban sprawl, he loved them, taught them, challenged and exhorted them, lived with them for what may have been a year and half. And in the midst of all of their challenges and threats, he constantly encouraged them to stay rooted in Christ, to serve without wrangling and to let the Spirit lead in all ways.

At the end of his writings to them, he simply leaves words about keeping relationships aligned in the reconciling love of Christ: {A literal translation would read}... "Bye, strength to you, be encouraged, consoled, comforted, agreeable, living in the peace of the God of love. Holy kisses, handshakes, hugs, fist bumps around. All Christ's people greet you. (ALL of them!) Never forget that the Holy Trinity has your back."

- Jesus encourages his disciples, in every age and time, after the Resurrection with "THE GREAT COMMISSION."

It began with worship, even when some still doubted, the path is clear: Go, baptize (Saint Amelia, beloved of her family, beloved to us as a child of God!), teach, remain in mission because my witnesses have the greatest encouragement of all: "You have my authority and I am with you always to the end of all time."

Encouraged, empowered! Even this day as we worship the God we serve.

My friends in Christ, these June Sunday are about mission. And I challenged, invited you last week, to consider how we are an inviting church. As we gather and are renewed, how do we find ourselves faithful in witness like those who first spread the Gospel.

Remember our Baptismal covenant, encouraging and supporting one another, deepening our relationships in Christ within the safety of our fellowship/community, how do we speak of our experience of life together? And how do we mark conversation with words that include our worship, our congregation, the opportunities we present as a healthy congregation? Who do we invite to gather with us that we might encourage others too?

In this week's *Trendings*, I asked that you read the media of the congregation, like today's bulletin. Note in some way the places where a person - where you - have or could receive support, encouragement in your lives that others too could share.

Saint Andrew's is a congregation which lives to bring encouragement. It is a place of safety each week for those who need to know that they are cared for and supported in their life journey. And all under the sign of the Cross in which we begin our worship and each new day.

In 9 of his letters, Paul uses the word "encourage" as one of the greatest gifts of the Spirit. Most often he links the word with the word "patience." A particular gift in the times we share in the world. Encourage one another with patience!

Where have you felt encouraged within our community in Christ? How do you encourage others in witness through word and action?

A faith community once declared July "Friendship Month."

"We hear a lot of talk about what the church should be, and what it should not be. We are classified, catalogued, dissected, analyzed, until we have a feeling like the man who made his first visit to the city. He drove his car down the main street and then became so confused by the traffic, he parked it in the middle of the street and walked.

"There are many subtle and not so subtle changes around us. The church feels them for a congregation is made up of people. But, a friendly hand, a good natured smile, a timely word is never out of season. WE live in an age where every person is our neighbor. In this time, the church must lead and it begins on the local level... welcome our neighbors, our visitors as our friends. And watch the change take place in our Church!" Things

don't change much...those words written by Pastor Homer Berner, in *the Voice*, May 1964. Ed Short was co-chair of the Worship and Music Committee.

We gather to be encouraged and built up...how will that become your mission, your witness in the new week?

May the Holy Spirit protect and lead us into the world to lift high the Cross of Christ. Amen!