

Pentecost 8-B
7/18/21 CTK

Mark 6:30-34, 53-56; Jeremiah 23:1-6

Robbie Cajinski the musician over at Trinity Presbyterian came by this week to pick up our hand bells. A couple of years ago he had asked me if they could borrow them and then the pandemic put the kibosh on that, but now they are getting back under way at Trinity and are putting their hand bell choir together again. As we talked, we realized that if things work out they may be able to join us here for our final celebration and play some music for us. Our Legacy Team had been kind of concerned about finding a good home for the bells after our Holy Closure, and it looks like we may end up bequeathing them to Trinity, which would a blessing both to us, and to them.

This little episode was the kind of thing that helps me to remember that God is in charge and that everything is going to be OK when we are worrying about things. In the words of today's Psalm, the Lord is leading us in all this. The Lord is our shepherd.

We are in new territory. After talking about Holy Closure for over two years, it became a reality. We have a date. Christ the King is going to close its doors.

Last Sunday was a difficult day. A couple of people have said that it feels like a death of a loved one, and that sounds about right. We don't really have a road map for this part of the journey. We are stepping out in faith, trusting that God is guiding us.

We had a meeting of the Legacy Team on Tuesday night and it was a good meeting, it was hard work. There is a lot to think about, a lot of planning, and a lot of just rolling up our sleeves, along with Church Council. We have teams, for the different things that have to be done. Each team has one person - we a little short on people power these days as you know. I'd like to invite the Legacy Team to stand. So Pam is leading the Cleanup Team, she's been coming in for weeks putting stuff out for people to take and you can see she has gotten a lot of cleanup done. We want to leave the church in good shape for whoever comes after us.

Stefanie is Calendar Team – she is planning and keeping track of special events for the Sundays between now and our final service. Our goal is to make this time we have left together inspiring and fun.

Athena is in charge of the Administration Team – she’s taking care of contacting lawyers and the Secretary of State and the Attorney General to make sure we have our ducks in a row legally. She and I are working together with the synod with the procedures of the denomination synod that we have to follow. Barry is helping with all those things, including keeping track of membership. And Council continues the shepherd the congregation in our regular affairs.

This team feels a lot of responsibility for the whole flock, a strong need to make sure nobody gets lost in the process, or feels left behind none of the flock gets left behind. At the same time, we also feel that we have been called from among the flock to lead, to help to shepherd us through this journey. To be mini-shepherds; disciples, as we all are, of the great shepherd, the Good Shepherd. The Lord, who us our shepherd.

I don’t know much about sheep. I’ve think I’ve told the story about how I was helping out on a sheep ranch once and came close to being trampled by a big ram who didn’t feel like being sheared. Apart from that I don’t know much about sheep. But I think they get kind of a bad rap. I know that individualism and being a so-called Maverick is the ideal, and that calling somebody a sheep is an insult. To me, sheep have some good qualities – for example they seem to do a pretty good job of staying together and cooperating. Being a flock and following the shepherd. At least that’s how it is in the bible. Unity is an the ideal that Jesus holds up, and in fact the one the entire bible holds. As long as you know who the shepherd is, and recognize their voice.

Of course there’s always that one little sheep who gets lost, sometimes it’s you or me. Then we have to leave the rest of the flock and to find that one. Jesus says that in a parable. And then, sometimes a whole flock can feel lost. Mark talks about that in today’s gospel reading. Jesus looks out and sees a lost flock who seem like a sheep without a shepherd. The thing is, he’s right there, in front of them, but they just don’t recognize him. And let’s be honest, sometimes we do forget that God is with us, leading us. Maybe we are depressed or anxious or we panic for and for a moment. Or maybe we are having a great time, feeling lucky, and on top of the world when things are going great, the way we think we planned them. At either end of that spectrum, it’s possible to forget about God, and we can we get to the point where we feel pretty. Then we remember, “Hey we have a shepherd.” It’s God who brought us here and God is with us in this moment, and God will lead us forward from this moment on. Like that little moment when things came together so well with the bells when we were worried about finding a good home for them.

Paul says today, we are the household of God. That's another good image for the flock. We disciples are like a family, not always related by blood, but bound together. In our case, Paul says, as he pushes this metaphor, we are bound together in Christ who is the cornerstone. In the same way that the shepherd is the cornerstone of whole flock, without whom it would all fall apart. We are a temple built on Christ, a dwelling place for God. That's us, that's who we strive to be. And God, in Christ, is part of the building, part of the flock.

So, I'm glad for these passages of scripture and for any moments that remind me that we are in this together, we are a dwelling place for God, we are the flock of a Good Shepherd. Grateful for any reminder that the one who leads us, guides, keeps us safe - as the Psalmist says leads us in the paths of righteousness, beside still waters, who restores our soul, even in the valley of the shadow of death - will finally, bring us all safely home, into the fold.