

Chris Murphy

May 26th, 2024

Scripture: Acts 2: 37-47

Sermon Title: Christian Community

Prayer...

Introduction:

This is my last sermon before my sabbatical and I am reminded that most sermons highlight one of three things:

1. Solitude- Personal relationship with God.
2. Christian Community- our life together as followers of Jesus and the family of God
3. Mission in the world- how we serve together a world that may or may not know Jesus Christ. We service through actions of compassion and justice and through sharing the story of Jesus and the love and salvation he brings to the world.

Today, we are talking about Christian Community.

Scripture Reflection:

I love our passage today because it highlights how the early church, empowered by the Holy Spirit became an amazing community.

Everyone shared with each other. They were united in a common love of Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit to spread the good news and their love was contagious.

As I reflect on the early church after Pentecost, I am reminded that the Holy Spirit is also active in our church community. Christ is at work here in us and through us. We are sharing the peace and love of Christ with our community and the broader world. We are embodying a Christ centered church of grace, hope, love and peace.

As I pondered how we experience Christian community at Newberg First Presbyterian, I realized it might be fun to ask you the question. How do you experience community here? What groups or experiences do you participate in through our church that helps you experience the gift of community? (Pass microphone)

These are all great examples of community and I want to share if you are still looking for community, we can help you find a place to belong and connect.

One recent experience of community I witnessed at our church was on Tuesday, May 14th, earlier this month when the deacons, elders, and a few other staff members met to hear a presentation of the visioning process of our church. We started our meeting with Abby's pizza. I have learned through my years as a youth and young adults pastor that you can never go wrong with offering people pizza if you want to encourage and inspire them. After our pizza, we heard a presentation by Ciaran Hynes on some visioning we wish to do as a church.

You will hear even more about our vision this coming fall when I come back from sabbatical, but one thing I will highlight is that our church is clarifying itself as a community that embodies peacemaking, deep love and inclusion of all people, a desire to

celebrate all ages and foster intergenerational relationships in community, while also growing younger and raising up new generations to follow Jesus. There is a lot excitement among our leaders about how we can be a middle way church that is both modern and traditional, that embraces different worship styles and that fosters passion for spirituality, social justice, and compassionate ministries with our neighbors, including other nations in the world. We want to care for the houseless and the elderly and to celebrate ethnic and cultural diversity. We are excited for the way our Newberg Peace Garden helps us connect to God's creation while fostering a sacred place of rest, renewal, and unity in our community.

Friends, even though we are a church that is 134 years old, we are just getting started. God has so much in store for us.

I want to invite you this summer and as we vision more in the fall to embrace your participation in our Christian community. Although, I

will be away on sabbatical for the next three months, I will still be with you in my heart and I know this experience will only grow help us grow stronger as a Christian community. I will be praying for you and I covet your prayers for my family as we rest, relax, and have some needed time of recreation and restoration. I plan to come back stronger and with more energy for all that God has in store for us.

I want to offer us an image of community today that connects to the Holy Trinity. When you think of the Holy Trinity – God as Creator, Father/Mother, Son, and Holy Spirit and I want you to imagine that you are in a boat with the Holy Trinity, but you are not alone. With the Holy Trinity are also the other members and attenders of this church community. We are in the boat with the Holy Trinity. Yesterday, we celebrated the life of Phil Picard, a former member of our church and a Navy veteran. On this Memorial Day weekend, I imagine our

Navy veterans might have a special appreciation for this image of us being in a boat together.

As we journey through the seas of this life as a Church community in our boat with the Trinity, we will sometimes face storms and at other times we will experience calm waters, but we can put out trust in the community of the Trinity to guide our boat and to lead us through the waters. We need not be afraid of the future. On the contrary, we are to enjoy the water and the beauty of the seas. If we picture a sail on our boat, we can imagine that the Holy Spirit is the breath of God or the wind who will lead us where we need to go and as we go we will share the peace and love of Christ with all creation.

Thank you friends for being on this journey with me. Thank you for being Christian community for one another. Like the early church who shared their possessions and cared for one another, may we embody a loving Christian community for one another and for our

neighbors who need to find a place of belonging and a place of grace, hope, love, and peace.

In the Name of the Holy Trinity: God our Mother and Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

Acts 2:37-47

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers,[a] what should we do?”

38 Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” 40 And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” 41 So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

43 Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 All who believed were

together and had all things in common; 45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds[b] to all, as any had need. 46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home[c] and ate their food with glad and generous[d] hearts, 47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.