

My Sisters and Brothers of the Risen Christ,

During the month of May we continue to celebrate the season of Easter. Yes, we will hear Easter hymns of victory over death and joy and hope and love. But then such good news is often included in the hymns we sing. May includes Mother's Day which we celebrate as we offer tea and donuts at 9:30 am to celebrate all the women who have nurtured us throughout our lives. The youth are planning a drama as the sermon message and will be worship leaders during our worship service. We only have one more confirmation class this year. We are finally welcoming spring. Did you notice that blossoms suddenly appeared after two warm days!! Finally!

May 20 is the day of Pentecost. None of our students are ready to be confirmed this year, but I encourage everyone to wear red to celebrate the birthday of our church.

May is also the month for primary elections. We'll be glad when the ads end (for a few months). I would like to ask each and every candidate and each and every voter, *"How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help?"* [1 John 3:17] this question often helps me filter issues of compassion and justice in our nation and throughout the world. Many candidates "talk the talk" but their voting records do not show support for causes they talk about.

We live in a nation that promotes democracy and strives to abide by the U.S. Constitution. That is reassuring as I hear of civil strife throughout the world. But any man made institution has limits, the church on earth, congregations in Zelenople, and our state and federal government. Even congregations who proclaim Christ's victory over death and forgiveness of sins struggle to be in the world but not of the world. The question for us Christians is always *"Who is my neighbor?"* [Luke 10:29] We don't ask this question to justify ourselves as did the lawyer standing before Jesus, but to search our hearts to see how we can respond to those in need as did the Good Samaritan.

As Christians we ponder and debate how to find workable solutions for feeding the hungry, providing jobs with just wages and benefits, offering educational opportunities, being brave enough to reach out to strangers. As voters, we struggle with the same issues, wondering what would Jesus have us do.

And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us. [1 John 3:23-24]

Often what is missing in political debates and even our own political discussions is the values of the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. In the months ahead as you contemplate the news, the elections, your response to everyday situations, consider who is your neighbor and how your response reflects the love of Christ Jesus.

Christ has been raised from the dead
God gifts us with the Holy Spirit.
May God, whose power working in us
Can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine,
Grant each of you the gifts of faith and hope, AMEN

Shalom,

Pastor Bev+