

SERMON FOR JUNE 18, 2017

Anxiety makes us sick. We medicate the physical symptoms with Pepto Bismal or ibuprofen. We are better at dealing with the body's reaction to anxiety than we are to our spirit's pain or the emotional toll that anxiety demands.

When we are anxious and we feel vulnerable and faith doesn't seem to drop easy relief into our laps, our best spiritual or emotional response is to retreat to a familiar place, a place where the known calms us and we feel the comfort of customary patterns and the spirit-soothing peace that comes with everyday routine. When we are anxious, we seek what we know. We seek the emotional landscapes that are so usual that we don't feel lost.

When we are anxious, we often don't analyze or strategize or try to understand. We do what makes the anxiety stop. We take hold of the familiar. Better the devil you know, as the old saying goes.

We are in an anxious time. The world is anxious with fear of terrorist attacks, missile launches, increasing militarization, famine, fire, climate change- you name it, we've got it. News reports make us tremble. World anxiety is the frame for our lives.

And in that frame, we see our home-town anxiety, our personal anxiety and our Parkminster anxiety. Right now, we are an anxious bunch. The known is ending. We are bidding farewell to people we love and respect, and there is more of that on the horizon. We feel smaller now and in this moment, less certain, less confident, more worried. There is new staff waiting in the wings, !

they will be fine. But we have the work of getting to know Joe and Heather, the work of adjusting to the gifts they bring and to forging a new future.

I know you are uneasy. You tell me that every day. And I hear and I see that in the face of the future, you are excitedly apprehensive and fearfully anxious. In this transition time, you are worried and you are going back to what we do when we worry. You are retreating to old ways of being Parkminster. You are edging back to the way things were when I came here. Better the devil you know.

Now is the time to take hold of Paul's wisdom that he offered the Corinthians who were trembling with anxiety on the journey between the pasts they had left behind and the future they were creating. Paul reminded them of the holy frame for their lives. He reminded them that spirit blesses each with gifts to share in community, and the sharing is for the common good, for our collective future, for our common life.

This is not the time to fall away from one another nor to let old animosities take over our desire to be inclusive and accepting and whole.

Maybe it's time to recall what the gifts of the spirit have brought Parkminster as those gifts have been shared for the good of all. We have:

- ❖ Supported the Al Mohamads through 18 months of transition, physically and emotionally,
- ❖ Planned and inaugurated a new governance structure
- ❖ Held an outreach fair for the community

- ❖ **Called two new ministers**
- ❖ **Picked up the pastoral care ministry when Elaine fell and broke her ankle and when she was caring for Ross.**
- ❖ **Are financially viable, enjoy and maintain this beautiful building and property and have gorgeous gardens**
- ❖ **Have more volunteers than most churches our size.**
- ❖ **Have hosted large and successful young family parties.**
- ❖ **Have built a beautiful labyrinth**
- ❖ **Have started and maintained the Food Truck project**
- ❖ **We have started a successful Parent-Child drop in**
- ❖ **Are hosting a strawberry social for members who can no longer attend**
- ❖ **We have improved our support of the Mission and Service Fund**
- ❖ **We are invested in Habitat and Mary's Place, and lots more.**
- ❖ **We are hosting some who are living with AIDS for their community lunches**
- ❖ **We are deepening our affirming identity**
- ❖ **We have a great music program that brings us life and beauty**
- ❖ **We are healing old hurts with confidence and caring**
- ❖ **We look out for one another day by day, in times of sorrow and fear.**
- ❖ **We have a happy and mutually respectful staff.**
- ❖ **We are brave enough to think new god-thoughts and to worship in an open and participatory way**

The list is long and it could be a lot longer. Let's focus on what we have become, on what we have created, on the ways spirit has blessed us and on the ways we have focused on our common good first. Paul tells us that this is the way to healthy church, to healthy family, to right relationship. This is the way to stay loving in an age of anxiety. This is the way to be the people of God.