

Connections

The Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashana, begins this evening at sundown. Our OT reading **coming** from I Chronicles, then, seems especially fitting, as we remember our shared lineage. As the name implies, Chronicles provide a recounting of Jewish scripture, much of which echoes the stories found in Samuel and Kings. However, the genealogies and the narratives of David in I Chronicles include additional material which help shape the theme. More specifically, I Chronicles journals *the stories of the past in order to provide a message of hope for the future.*

The unknown author casts King David in quite the positive light in this book, excluding reminders of his sins, his weaknesses, his failures, more than likely knowing such awareness is well known from previous books. The recasting of the stories of David aspire to create an image of the messianic promise.

The small sliver of story we will hear captures David's authentic adoration of Yahweh while affirming and beckoning the people into embodying such praise. David has taken the process of building the temple just so far. His son Solomon would soon take up the mantle.

As the generations have listed so let us listen anew for God's word:

Then David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly; David said: "Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever. ¹¹Yours, O LORD, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. ¹²Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.

¹⁴"But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. ¹⁵For we are aliens and transients before you, as were all our ancestors; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope. ¹⁶O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for

building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own. ¹⁷I know, my God, that you search the heart, and take pleasure in uprightness; in the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you. ¹⁸O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our ancestors, keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people, and direct their hearts toward you. ¹⁹Grant to my son Solomon that with single mind he may keep your commandments, your decrees, and your statutes, performing all of them, and that he may build the temple for which I have made provision.”

I Chronicles 29:10-19

This, too, is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

This assembly gathered here is not at the threshold of building a temple to God. At least not the brick and mortar structure to be lavishly adorned in praise and honor of Yahweh as the Israelites were anticipating. Rather, this assembly, is present here today, yes, to praise God, but more specifically, to give thanks to God for the abundance of talents and commitments and generosity that have and will continue to build and shape this church, this congregation.

We are a bit like the author of Chronicles who retells the truths of David's best self, knowing there are disconcerting incidents of tension, betrayal and estrangement. Today we lift up the truths of this congregation's best self, even as we continue to pray for healing mercies and redemption for those circumstances of brokenness.

At its best Christ's church universal and church specific are consistently seeking to know, honor and serve God which translated includes knowing, honoring and serving God's people. What that looks like, sounds like, feels like is cyclical with change, like the seasons around us.

What this church looks, sounds, feels like in 2020 will be relatively different from 50, 60 even 10 years ago.

Some of that is the impact of an ever-changing culture with its demands and opportunities.

Some of that is the exploration and expansion of our theological understandings, often reflected in new hymns that are sung, in liturgies spoken, maybe even in sermons preached.

How each generation incorporates history and current events into their thinking and their choices create a complex set of relational and communication challenges.

Some shift is in the blend of who you see or don't see sitting in the pews and chancel, the varying talents and Spiritual gifts and passions that intersect at a given time in the life of the church.

The list of change and evolution could go on.

And, yet, there are consistencies and legacies and traditions and qualities that are strong ties that bind the kinships...tenured and becoming... of this congregation.

Thus, we who are called to be part of any given faith community visit and revisit our ways of being and responding with who we are and who we want to be as the people of God.

With the Spirit, you, each one of you with your varying and unique ways of being and seeking are shaping and sustaining this as the church of which you want to be part.

You may or may not be familiar with Cary Presbyterian's Mission Statement. It is displayed regularly on annual reports and the website. See what holds true and where you find or want to find yourself:

We are God's family through the common bond of faith in Jesus Christ. In gratitude for God's love and grace, and empowered by the Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in God's love, to worship God faithfully, to nurture one another, to share the Gospel, and to help those in need.

Granted, I would expect this to be a core understanding for most any Christian congregation! The words even hint at our ancestor David's proclamation:

*God, **we** give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.*

For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.

All this abundance that we have provided for building you a house comes from your hand.

I have seen your people, who are present here, offering feely and joyously to you.

You have in your bulletin a list of gifts and talents with several questions alongside. Over the last few months the Generosity Team and the Elders have been pondering the array of abilities and ministries within this congregation, recognizing the collective abundance of participation and commitment that flows from so many of you, realizing there may also be a hidden or held back talent or knack you have that is needed to help in the nourishment and nurture of this body even as you are being nourished and nurtured.

You know what else? Sometimes it's timing. We hear the beautiful Ecclesiastes text: To everything there is a season and a time for everything....

For example, as Tim noted, some folks who are asked to be officers have to say not at this time. Others have said, specifically, this is now the right time for me to respond to God's call, to contribute in this particular way. Time in and of itself is a gift requiring our attention and discernment.

One more portion of abundance in this congregation is your financial giving. Not everyone gives. Not everyone can. As best I can tell this has never been nor will this be a big money church. Yet, the collective, solid monetary commitments strongly undergird the plethora of ministries this congregation supports and is nurtured by. That's abundance!

We are God's family through the common bond of faith in Jesus Christ. In gratitude for God's love and grace, and empowered by the Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in God's love, to worship God faithfully, to nurture one another, to share the Gospel, and to help those in need.

That list of gifts in your hand? Those gifts are what make this mission statement more than words. Your talents and imagination are on there. You may even have some to add. **Thank you.** *Thank God.*

O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our ancestors, keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people, and direct their hearts toward you.

Friends, with gratitude for this church in this time and in this place will all who are able please stand, affirming our faith in our gracious God and in being the best of who we are called to be together.

Affirmation of Faith

One: We belong to God,
creator of all that is and all that is to come,
abundant provider of the gifts in this life
and the gifts in our own hearts.
It is God alone who gives life,
who is generous beyond measure with grace and blessing.

**All: We follow Jesus, whom God sent to teach and heal,
to show us a new way of living,
with love and trust and courage, with joy and generosity.
In this faith Jesus gave of himself, even his very life.
He was crucified and buried;
yet God raised him from death,
and he lives among us, and grants his spirit to us.**

**We live by that Holy Spirit,
and entrust ourselves to its guidance and empowerment.
As members of the church, the Body of Christ,
we devote ourselves to lives of love,
rejoicing in the power of forgiveness,
the reality of resurrection,
and the mystery of eternal life. Amen.**

