Christian means Community

Easter 7, May 6, 2018

Narrative Lectionary

Philippians 1: 1-18 Russell Mitchell-Walker

Paul is in prison and writes this letter to the Philippians from prison. He is full of gratitude for their faithfulness in their support of him during this time. In those days, when one was in prison, they had to rely on outside support for their basic needs such as food and water. So clearly, the Philippians have been providing for Paul in this way. They see their Christian mission as caring for those in need in the community.

Being a Christian, means being part of a community. Paul during his time in prison was dependent on this community and wouldn’t have survived without it. God’s love is expressed in community and the love and support we receive and share with one another. The good news of Jesus, our experience of God’s love and grace, is not an individual possession but a communal reality that God is enacting all the time and in which we are invited to participate. What keeps you connected to a Christian community? To this Christian community? Do you know of folk in our community who are losing that connection? Have you thought of reaching out to them and sharing your love and support, to learn why that connection is waning?

As you live your life of faith, are you experiencing God’s love in your life, in and through others? Are you growing in your love and patience for others? In your compassion for those in need? These are all elements of God growing and working in our lives, in our faith. It is important to draw on the strength, love and example in community of this love, compassion, generosity and justice. There are many ways this can be expressed in our church community and in our wider community.

While I was on sabbatical I visited with a number of people in the neighbourhood who were involved in the neighbourhood in one way or another – politicians, teachers, the YMCA director, community workers. One city counsellor, Lori Bresciani, identified that she was aware that refugees whose sponsorship have ended, still need support. What are simple daily interactions for us or information we receive can be great challenges for them. Near the end of my sabbatical time, Ahmed Sabawi, who I had been in touch with for A Taste of Skylight, wanted to get together with me. I met with him and Mitri Musleh, and they shared with me about their work with newcomers and the New Canadian Integration Society, supporting those whose sponsorship has ended. They have some ideas for partnership with us that I thought sounded very positive and possible. As we explore how to love in our community and love our community, I have invited them to share with us about their program and their ideas for working together. I am glad to welcome them, and invite Mitri to speak with us now.