

# Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Oct 27, 2019 – Reformation Sunday

## Good to the Holy Spirit and Us

(Ps 65 and Acts 15:22-35)



**Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets,  
said much to encourage and strengthen  
the believers.  
(Acts 15:32)**

### Insights from the story within the story

What I want to focus on this morning is the process of being church that emerges from this story within the broader story of the Spirit spreading the work and witness of the church – what is clear is that the Spirit works primarily through the whole community, the whole Body of Christ still in the world – this is not about heroic individuals but about a faithful community serving as ambassadors for the forgiving and reconciling love of God that redeemed the world in Jesus Christ – being convicted and compelled to reform how the church saw itself and operated in mission was the soul of the movements for church reform that we now call the Reformation – major figures we remember and focus on are Martin Luther in Germany and John Calvin in Switzerland – but it really revolves around the work of the Holy Spirit inspiring communities to break out of situations in which a small group of people, religious and political, lorded it over them and exploited them – exercised tyranny over them – coerced and confined them – denying them God's rights to their full humanity and its contribution to God's mission of blessing the creation – it was a movement to “encourage and strengthen” all God's people to collaborate in contribution to God's intent for creation – and to give all of God's people their proper place of participation and responsibility -

### Provocative points to ponder – as always, too many to cram into one sermon

- That focus on a person rather than the people has been amplified in our culture – to the detriment, I think, of a deep acknowledgement of it takes a whole community to reform things for the better – and a big part of that better is to create space for all those people to contribute all the gifts that God has given them for blessing the world – and that gift may be something as simple as showing up, encouraging and strengthening others with the gift of your being with them – that's what happens throughout Luke's account of the spread of the early church – people are sent, they show up, and they stay to encourage and strengthen – it's interesting, isn't it, that we know very little about how long they stay – I've been struck by this for the first time in this reading of Acts – I get the

sense that the answer is however long it takes for the seeds of the gospel to germinate and take root within and for the communities with whom those sent (in twos or more, by the way) are preaching, and teaching, and caring

### **How does this apply to our mission here at Brentwood?**

My social media of choice in sowing seeds of the gospel, of encouraging and strengthening believers at any stage of their journeys into trusting the forgiving and reconciling love of God, is Facebook – multiple pages, most of which are connected to the mission we are doing together here at Brentwood – not surprised, but concerned, that others often credit what’s happening in and through this congregation to me – I try to gently, but firmly, remind them that it’s the whole community that is creating space for musicians and artists to hone and perform their passions here – every one of us here today and those who will be here in future weeks are the church that makes this happen – we are all making our unique and crucial contributions to what the Spirit is doing with and through us – opening up that space was what the Reformation was really all about – we honour that heritage best by doing for our time and place what they did for theirs – and a good way of understanding and practicing that more fully is to remember what the Spirit was doing in and through all the people involved in the early church as Luke recorded it in Acts

### **My Notes**

### **My Prayers**

