

**Brian's Sermon Text for Sunday Worshiping at Brentwood
Sunday, July 19, 2020**

Made Holy

(Psalm 139:1-12 and 1 Corinthians 7:1-16)



**It is to peace
that God has called you.
(1 Cor 7:15b)**

Word to Ponder = Holy

Congregational Wisdom = whole, touched by the divine, sacred, pure, deeply sacred, blessed, peace, consecrated to God, God with us, dedicated,

There is a phrase that people who help organizations develop often use -
forming, storming, norming, and performing.

It's a summary of how reflective practitioners in this field
have observed the dynamics

of how people grow together in communities.

And communities are our natural habitat as human beings.

Further, our Creator desires us to be one loving community,

Practicing faith, hope, and love,

as Paul came to summarize it

later in these conversations.

And that's the point of drawing this phrase from organizational development
to our attention this morning.

There is no question that the Corinthian church,
in its many contentious factions,

is in the storming phase of its development.
The storms rage around rules and rituals.
Various factions contend that you must do this or that.
There is little curiosity
about what God in Christ forming through the Spirit wants.
It's about what humans think has to happen to be holy.
They have put their trust in rules and given their loyalty to rituals,
Then starting fighting with each other
about whose rules and rituals are truly holy.

Change the dates, names, and situation
and you can easily draw contemporary parallels.

Into this new community
filled with so many different ways of understanding
what it means to be holy,
Paul speaks gently, imaginatively, firmly, and persistently
about the simple grace and truth
to which his encounter with the risen Jesus has awakened him.
The Creator calls us to a peace
that crosses all of the boundaries
that humans have constructed,
and often attributed to gods,
to keep themselves safe and sound.
And their definition of 'themselves'
is often forged over against others they fear as threats.

For Paul, as he processes the ways
that Jesus is reforming his practice of living his faith,
of living out of his trust in and loyalty to
the life-giving Creator of the world,
his old ways of dividing us from them
are proving to be woefully inadequate
for participating in the Creator's intentions and missionings.
Paul's previous ways of imagining the law and the prophets
missed the whole point of God's holiness.

That point, as Paul comes to realize more and more deeply,
as we follow the reformation of his faith through his letters,
is that God's peace, God's restoration of wholeness in the world,

is not only seen but actually made in God's actions
in Jesus of Nazareth,
actions that save the world
through forgiveness and reconciliation.
That is the love in which we have faith and hope.
That is the love that eliminates all the "thems"
and makes a new holy "us."

It's an "us" that I find wonderfully witnessed to
by Fred Rogers' whole way of understanding life.

Most of you know that Brentwood's big band,
guided by Ben MacRae,
is working on arrangements of songs from the TV show,
Mr Rogers' Neighbourhood.
We did very simple versions of them for Jazz Evensong Online last week.
As my reflections on these songs took shape,
I awakened to how strong the parallels were
to what Paul was aspiring to among the Corinthians.
From neighbourhoods in America in the 1960s and 1970s,
rife with contentious divisions,
Fred Rogers invited his viewers, children and their families,
into the sanctuary of his living room
where they were welcomed with
respect, empathy, and hope,
no matter who they were and what their circumstances.
Rogers embodied for them the peace that God offered.
He modeled the Creator's holiness with them,
a holiness that welcomed them all home.

May our holiness be filled with that same vision
Of forgiveness and reconciliation.

My Notes

My Prayers

Prayers of the People

[spoken or written into the service]

You make us holy
to participate in your reforming of your world
into a community of faith, hope, and love.
They are such simple words,
but we have far too often
used them in superficial ways to protect narrow interests.
Break us out of those prisons.
Nourish us in the depth and breadth of your holiness.
Made us instruments of your peace.

And listen as we sing again
the provocative words of the prayer you taught us:

