

Gathering - Gather Us Close

Creator, we give you thanks for this place,
this land where we have gathered,
and we are mindful that we are
kin with all who call this place home.
Christ, our wounded healer,
who also suffers the pains of creation,
gather us close to your heart
as we express our grief and lament today.
Spirit of life, blow among us
as we join our hearts in worship
together with all of creation. Amen.

Wendy Janzen (Canada), 2022. Burning Bush Forest Church
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Sermon Starter – Many People’s Sunday

Sharing Faith with the Nations in the Neighborhood

Acts 16:9-15

Paul has a vision and with his companions discerns it as a call to go and preach the gospel to the people in Macedonia. They travel several days before they finally arrive in Philippi where it seems that nobody welcomes them. Have they misinterpreted the vision? Where was the man of Macedonia that begged Paul to come? Have you ever obeyed and followed God’s nudging, even when not everything made sense?

The apostles meet Lydia, a dealer of purple cloth who is a worshipper of God and her heart is opened to become a believer. What is Paul’s role in her responsiveness? What is God’s role in her responsiveness?

There are many people who are religiously oriented to God but do not necessarily know Jesus Christ. Consider friends from your neighbourhood or community. How can personal stories or stories from Scripture introduce them to Jesus?

Lydia becomes a believer and responds by sharing the good news with her household which leads to baptisms and she extends hospitality to the apostles. Stories, whether personal or Biblical tend to focus on the change for the person receiving the good news. How are messengers of the good news also changed and transformed when good news is shared?

Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5

The image of the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven is an indicator that God’s Kingdom is not something that we will only taste after death or in our imaginations; it is also to be a physical and earthly reality now.

Revelation 21: 22-26 speak of all nations walking by God’s light, where there will be no barrier for any nation and each nation will contribute its gifts to life and worship in God’s city. What nation or nations are represented in your congregation? Who are the nations in your neighbourhood, community or city? Does your congregation know these nations well enough to know their gifts? How does receiving their gifts help us know God more fully? Does receiving the gifts of other nations change how we share the gift of our faith, Jesus Christ?

KyongJung Kim (Korea/Canada), 2015.

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