

June 21, 2020
1 Corinthians 12:4-13
First Parish UCC, Brunswick, ME
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Living the Covenant

Do Justice,
Love Kindness, and
Walk Humbly with God.

As we do this work we bring a variety of gifts to the work. It is important to learn what your particular gifts and your ways of service are so you can share them freely. Some feel called to march in the streets. Some feel called to contact their legislators. Some feel called to take a knee in prayer. All for the good of the whole. As we heard in today's reading:

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

We work on living out our church covenant but, over time, our church covenant also works on us. That's how you know it is a good covenant. This covenant works at all levels of our life – personal, familial, and communal. This covenant strikes me as a good construct for reflection on our daily living in response to the global pandemic.

Recently, I received a request to reflect on the challenges families face as they make decisions related to the phased re-opening of society. In some ways it was easier when everything was still shut down. There were fewer decisions to make. Now we are having to make more individual and family decisions about what level of risk we are willing to assume and what level of risk is appropriate for our community as a whole.

With even only two people in a household, you may find you have three (or more) opinions. The more people in the household the more opinions and perspectives you have to negotiate. It's not easy. And increasingly we are now negotiating with other households as well.

Do Justice.

It's not about just me or even my household. This is a global pandemic, affecting everyone. We have responsibility to take others into consideration as we make our decisions. We need to consider health issues and also economic issues. We need to protect people's health and also support their financial needs.

It seems to me that one of the most just practices is to wear a mask. This relates to both health and economic concerns. It is about protecting all of us and freeing all of us. The more people wear masks the better the protection and thus we can all move about more freely in the community.

Love Kindness.

Some of us are more fearful than others – even in the best of times. A global pandemic can ramp up people's fear meters greatly. When you find yourself in conflict with loved ones about what is appropriate/safe and what is not, it can be helpful to create a safe space for conversation about what are each person's deep concerns.

Yes, we are all concerned about catching the virus and/or passing it on to a vulnerable loved one. But maybe another concern is a fear that the life we have known is gone forever. Maybe we are afraid about adapting to a new normal. Maybe we're not very good at adapting. So we just want to get out there and act like everything is OK.

This is a time to practice listening deeply and expand our capacity for compassion – toward ourselves and others.

Walk Humbly.

A microscopic virus humbles us. We are not in control. Some researchers have pointed out that our environmental degradation helped to facilitate the proliferation of this virus in the first place in the animal world before it then spread to humans. This is a reminder that what we do to the planet we do to ourselves. We live in one interwoven web. We have to find better ways to live in conjunction with the rest of life on this planet.

Walking humbly with God indeed draws us to our knees in prayer. That we might learn more about ourselves, those we live with and our wider community. As we do this, we live in the trust that indeed God walks with us – now and always.

Confirmands –

Simone, Bert, Ian, Izzy, and Angeline,
We are grateful to walk with you and to have you walk with us. We need your spiritual wisdom as much as you need ours. The Spirit has blessed you with gifts and service for the common good that bless our community now. Thank God!!

Peace and Justice be with you all.