

## Walking

Have you ever found yourself down or depressed about a situation, and then, something happens, or you encounter someone, and it cheers you up? Maybe you were down about your job, or something that you're involved with, and feeling as though your time is not well-spent. Or maybe you had your hopes and dreams squashed in a series of events, only to have something happen that would brighten the way for you.

Simon and Cleopas are walking home to Emmaus from Jerusalem after they had been in the city for the Festival of Passover. It was during this time that they had witnessed the mob scene, crucifixion, and heard of the resurrection of Christ. They walked because they had no other mode of transportation. The majority of people in this era walked. It was usually done in a pack or at least with another person.

On this walk, they were participating in what my friend Quentin calls a “postmortem” of an event. A postmortem is similar to an autopsy. However, they discuss what happened at the event and what they would like to remember. I am sure that many of us have engaged in the same activity, but after a party, a funeral, or an event. Simon and

Cleopas are doing the same thing. It becomes easier as they are introduced to a stranger who seems unaware of the event that took place.

These two had been through the gamut of emotions from A-Z and were happy to share them with this stranger. And, according to their custom, they invited this person to share a meal with them. It was here that they recognized the Risen Christ in their presence. “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”

How often do our hearts burn? No, NOT heartburn, but when our hearts are filled with passion about something or someone. Do our hearts burn with the love of Jesus? Do we recognize Jesus in the ordinary part of the day? Sometimes we have people come by the church because they need something, i.e., financial assistance, or even someone to simply listen to them and pray with them.

It was interesting to spend time with the neighbors this winter. Our guests who came for lunch on Mondays or Thursdays were greeted at the door, shown to Fellowship Hall, served lunch, and provided with

an opportunity to experience community. Those who volunteered can attest to this as well. Jesus did tell us, “Wherever two or three are gathered, there am I in your midst.” Recognizing the presence of Christ in our neighbors was an awe-filled experience.

Sometimes, when we walk, move, or sit with others, we can find ourselves in deep conversation, much like the one that Simon and Cleopas were having. By our very actions, we find ourselves sharing our faith. As we share our faith, we are able to deepen our own. I would like to encourage everyone to invite someone to “walk” with them in the weeks to come. Invite them to go when it is not pouring rain. Invite them to “walk” with you here at church. If you are on Facebook, please share the posts that we put out about our Sunday worship at both First Congregational Church and Southwick Congregational.

We can go on a physical or virtual walk to recognize the presence of Christ, to feel our hearts burning to symbolize the transformative power of God, and to turn our disappointment into mission. Or, we can

recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread, not only at Communion when we celebrate it here, but any time you share a meal with someone.

I encourage all of us to take a walk or spend some time with others to share, wonder, sing, dance, or simply be in the presence of God. May we be moved to recognize Jesus in the people we meet, feel our hearts burn with the transformative power of Christ, and even move from disappointment to mission. Much like Thomas in our reading last week, may our doubt turn to faith. Amen.