January 16, 2023

TO: Friends of Melrose

FROM: Rev. Sonia Ireson

Greetings in the name of the One who loves us and holds us dear

Today is a chilly, gloomy day. The trees are spectacularly covered in white – not a silver thaw (ice) but more like snow that has been glued on to the branches. With the proliferation of fog, the white trees, the gloom of the weather, it has an other-worldly look about it.

Covid continues to dog us, in and around our congregation. It has indeed been a relentless leech-like attachment that we will be so glad to see come to an end. Every time we get our hopes up that we are in the clear, another round seems to materialize.

We want so much to be able to gather without fear, masks off, eat together, laugh, hug and converse. Our patience is low; our hope rises and falls with each external health pronouncement.

We are a little bit like the early Christian church awaiting the imminent return of Jesus, looking for an ending and a new beginning.

We are in the throes of preparation for our Annual Meeting which will take place February 26 beginning with Worship in the Sanctuary and continuing in the Auditorium. It is the time of year when we review our past year, hold up what has been life-giving and try to discern how we might make it better as we move into the future.

Our new Revitalization Task Group is currently in the analysis stage and will be bringing a preliminary report to the Annual Meeting. It is hoped that each of you will take the time to share your thoughts and input into a vision for Melrose’s future. Think about what your church has meant to you, what it is that has drawn you and held your interest and then, consider what you could offer as suggestions for its enrichment as we go forward.

There is no shortage of writers offering their thoughts on what is wrong with our present-day church; there is, however, a shortage of remedial answers. Society is changing; people are changing; attending church is in competition with many other societal events, many of which are appearing more attractive and successful at gaining the public’s attention.

It seems like we are reverting to the early days of Christianity which began in people’s homes with small groups of dedicated individuals following a common goal, to walk in the way of Jesus Christ. The more-wide spread “siren-like” ways of the world entice and call out to more and more people who silently abandon their commitments to be set aside in a community of like-individuals on a common path.

I have no idea what the future holds for us as Christians, but I do know that whatever prevails, God will use the circumstances to find a way to shift gears and move on to the end goal. Nothing in history has stopped God’s advancement, not world wars, nor idolatry, nor closing churches.

Intellectually, I find it so difficult to understand how brilliant people fail to grasp the brilliance of a Creator God. This amazing world that we live in did not just fall out of a big bang moment. The intricacies of life systems and the overwhelming connections between it all surpass any human understanding of how it works, let alone, how to design it. And then moving beyond intellect to the realm of spiritual knowing and intuitive reasoning builds a further complexity of mystery into the theory of life.

We are built to question. We are curious and want to know why, when and where, who and what. Our stories circulate around these five “W’s”. Our Universe is interpreted, past, present and future through our search for answers involving these questions. Our theological history comes together along with our communal and family traditions as we explore our past, learn from it, and live in our present with hopes for a better and sustained future.

Every thought we take leads us into new answers, and teases us into pursuing further truths. Sometimes, it takes us down a wrong path, one of disillusionment, or despair. The fragility of our mental health depends on our ability and our willingness to fortify ourselves with life-giving encouragement and messages of hope. We are a people of divine creation. We have been given God’s grace through the gifts of reason and discernment and we will use these to better the life God has given us in order to be a blessing to all.

There is no shame or dishonour in questioning; it is the way we grow and experience life. I hope your questions lead you to answers that reflect God’s love for you and God’s beloved creatures and as an added bonus, enrich the lives of others.

Be strong! Stay Safe! Be of good cheer!

Together in the Service of Christ

 Sonia

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