

READING/REFLECTION for Sunday, Sept. 18

Marsha:	There is a story in the book of Joshua where he brings the tribes together and recounts the long journey of the Israelites. He reminds them of God’s presence through it all and asks them to recommit to a life of following God. They do and Joshua marks the occasion by placing a stone under a tree to remind them of the covenant.
Doug:	Thousands of years later, Martin Luther, frustrated at the ways of the church, nailed his 95 theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg. He told those against him “Here I Stand. I can do no other.” Thus began the Protestant Reformation.
LeAnda:	We are still people of God trying to proclaim who we are and where we are going. We have come together to remember our history and dream of our future.
Janice:	A stone under a tree. A piece of paper nailed on a door. And today - a plow in the middle of a church to which we say “Here we walk”. Through the years, the people of God asked the same questions we ask today:
Marsha:	What are some ways that we can change to meet the needs people have today?
LeAnda:	What are some healthy ways to decide on what should change and how change should happen?
Janice:	What story of Grace’s journey causes you to smile? How could that memory be a part of Grace’s future?
Doug:	What have we <i>never</i> done that you’d find joy in trying? What attitudes and actions do we need to make it safe to try new things?
Janice:	Paul has a lot to say about how we are to live together ... how we are to help one another ... how we are to pay attention to what God is calling us to do. He tells us that in all things, we are to live a life of Love, Compassion, Peace, Freedom, Mercy, Justice and Humility
LeAnda:	What do we value at Grace? What is important to us?
Marsha:	Is it a strong sense of community?
Janice:	Is it a commitment to diversity – theologically, racially and socio-economically?
Doug:	Is it a desire for spiritual growth?
Marsha:	Is it a commitment to meet the needs of people in our community and an awareness of the need for social justice?
LeAnda:	Is it an appreciation for worship and the importance of listening to God’s voice and responding?

Doug:	Paul wrote to the people of Colossians about how to be a strong church. He told them: <i>“Regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It’s your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it. Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God!”</i>
Marsha:	Could this “garment of love” that Paul talks about be the same as the super hero capes our children like to wear? What a delightful image of a church full of folks wearing capes of love. Look around the room at all the super heroes who strengthen our church in so many ways! Lift them up in thanksgiving!
Janice:	And now, look at yourself - what super power does the “cape of love” give you?
LeAnda:	Like Paul, we Grace folks spend a lot of time talking about “gifts” and “identifying and using our gifts” and finding where our gifts can best be used. Fill in the blank: “Through me, God _____.” What does the answer to that question tell you about how God has gifted you spiritually?
Doug:	To discover the spiritual Gifts of Grace, maybe we can use the same exercise. How would you fill in the blank: “Through Grace, God _____.”?
Marsha:	What have you been doing at church when you felt the most energized and joyful? What does that tell you about your gifts?
Janice:	The questions that might stop us in our tracks is this: “What is the gift you still hold in exile?”
LeAnda:	The story of the Good Samaritan is such a part of our own story. We have heard it told and preached and we’ve seen it acted out and illustrated. But what does it mean to us when we ask the question “Who is our neighbor?”
Janice:	Think about that. Who are the neighbors we might be overlooking? How can we use our super powers to meet the needs of the neighbors who live near us and even those who live far away?
Doug:	How do we make neighbors out of our enemies?
Marsha:	“Here we walk”. Together, we are a combination of life experiences. What are the experiences that have shaped us as persons and as a church?
LeAnda:	What are some ways to create opportunities for spiritual experiences here at our church?
Janice:	What is this congregational proclamation we are wanting to create? It is our stone under a tree, our theses nailed to a door. It is our announcement of our intentions as a faith community of how we want to live with one another and each other.
Doug:	What do you want Grace to proclaim?