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Morning Prayer Reflection
November 17, 2024
26 Pentecost

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing unto you, O Lord. +

Good morning All Saints in the nave and on zoom.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews, St Paul, entreats us: 'Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together but encouraging one another.'

Today's scripture readings are loaded, connected and all over the place, frankly, I thought, as I reflected and prayed about sharing this sermonette with you. With respect God, give me strength! I did a lot of praying, researching and wondering how are these Old and New

Testament offerings connected? A bit like our world, our reality at this moment in time!

The prophet Daniel speaks of his people arising, and then deliverance. In Psalm 16, we hear of refuge, God's counsel, and one's body resting in hope, a comforting thought in times of sleeplessness, and finally God showing us the path of life.

Truthfully, I shied away from the Letter to the Hebrews because it seemed muddied with metaphor. Then, a gem concept emerged, as I consulted some commentators whom I respect and could understand. The Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor, the Rev. Tish Warren and the Rev. Jazzy Bostock, all Anglican clergy, illuminated the noun 'provocation' and its verb form 'to provoke', which took on new or renewed meaning: making something wonderful and positive happen. This meaning is often overshadowed by the negative, 'who provoked whom' in a conflict or altercation, etc.

But Paul 'used the word provoke in a positive light'. In Hebrews, our Paul wants his followers to PROVOKE each other, not to harass but to encourage, empower, and arouse each other to do good. Doesn't this take trust in God and each other, and a willingness to be vulnerable in

uncertain times? 'Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds not neglecting to meet together (in community). Barbara Brown Taylor states, 'the people must gather for mutual encouragement and support'. That's Jesus's Eucharistic and pastoral mandate as a faith community: to provoke love and do good. Barbara Brown Taylor emphasizes, 'The gift of Christ is not one that we've received to keep to ourselves. It is meant for the building of the whole body.'

A quote that was posted recently on Clergy Coaching Network, made me chuckle, warmly: 'The church, this community, is a gift from God, however some assembly is required.'

In closing, I leave you with this question to ponder: How can we do some provoking in love today, this week, this Festive Season, approaching...in the name of our brother and savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Hooper