

East Hartford
4 Easter Mother's Day

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Acts 2:42-47, Psa 23, Jn 10:1-10

Together We Can . . .

There is a story that goes something like this. Many people were invited to a wonderful banquet, promising many delicious and fragrant dishes. The banquet hall was filled with all the tantalizing aromas even as the guests were arriving. But it seemed that dinner was to be served a bit late. The guests became quite famished. Finally, they were invited to take their places at table.

Once seated, they discovered that all of the silverware was about three times the normal length. With gentlemen in tuxes, and ladies in gowns, no one was at all inclined to begin the soup course with by eating with their fingers, slurping from the soup bowls. Tensions grew quite high as one might expect at a such a gathering of elegant, and polite strangers.

Finally, a young mother picked up her too-long spoon and offered a spoonful of the lovely, hot soup to the man at her left. Others watched, then spurred on by hunger and good humor, quickly followed suit.

Ultimately, the banquet was reported to be highly successful. It was said that conversation that night was rich with giggles and laughter; friendships were formed that lasted for decades, and dessert was heavenly.

Together, we can Alone we cannot.

Of that earliest church it is written, "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all as any had need. They spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts." Together with folks who shared the faith and love, such folks together with God, could and did become the church, the church that would be carried away into India, Africa, around the

Mediterranean and more. According to this text they shared not only the Spirit and the faith, they shared together to create and live in commonwealth. I find it interesting that Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Kentucky are commonwealths, rather than states, to this very day.

Over time, much time, Church would change the world. Healing ministries have been part of the church since our earliest days. Over time, hospitals would come into being through the ministries of the church; even today many hospitals carry their faith roots in their names and practice. St. Francis, New York Presbyterian, Mt. Sinai. And so many more.

While the lifting of oppression and creation of a greater justice has been both accomplished and opposed by people working together as part of their faith, as has been noted before the arc of history bends towards justice.

The expansion of Civil Rights responding to various kinds of oppression; chattel slavery, subjugation of women, the various movements for peace amongst the several international armed conflicts. At this very moment, Christians, Muslims and Jews are working together to achieve peace in the middle east because they are driven by faith.

Again and again, first at baptism, then confirmation, and upon joining the church we renew the promises made for us at baptism, will you support the good stuff, the creation of peace, the growing of justice, the caring for creation? Will you oppose and resist the bad stuff, the evil, the oppression, the injustice? In every case the "right answer" sounds something like this, "I do, or I will with the help of God." No one goes it alone.

Now, I suspect that you do not really need me to remind you that cooperation and collaboration are essential to change the world for the better, raise children, to accomplish life. While we do well to periodically look at all the ways that we need one another, and to give thanks for one another, let me offer this reminder, humanity is not alone.

We only do faith (Christian and others) together and we only do it with the help of God. Take up your hymnal for a moment. Open the front cover, and what do you find glued on the front cover of the hymnal. The Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ. What is the first word in our Statement of Faith?

“We . . .” **We** believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of *our* Savior Jesus Christ and *our* God and to your deeds we testify.

Our Statement of Faith is all about us, together, in the plural, but more importantly our Statement of Faith is about God. We testify together about God, what God has done and is doing.

God **calls** worlds into being, **creates** and
calls people into the church,
promises
forgiveness, grace, courage, and God’s own
eternal sustaining presence in life as we
know it,
and life as we have yet to discover it.

Scripture says and our Statement of Faith echoes the idea that humanity is created in the image of God. I believe that we are like God in two essential ways. 1. In our capacity for love. 2. In our capacity for creativity. I believe it is in loving and in creating that we best reveal, show forth our divine selves.

As we look at generations of families, we have a phrase to describe some strong likeness of the children to their parents. How often do we remark, “that apple fell close to the tree.”? While it is not a perfect metaphor,

when we are all about loving,

and

when we are all about creating something good whether an object or peace or lunch or music,

I believe we are apples who are very close to the holy tree.

It is then that we most closely resemble the God who creates and loves us all.

Together we can - we can live and grow and love and create.
Together with each other, together with God who is with us always
and forever.

Let us adore and give thanks to our God.