

From Pastor Marissa Becklin

Being Church Beyond Our Walls

In the summer of 2020 I gave a Children's Sermon where I taught the lyrics to a song that I still think about often. The lyrics are as follows:

I am the church, you are the church, we are the church together,
All of God's people, all around the world,
yes we're the church together.
The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple,
The church is not a resting place, the church is a **people**.

As we have moved into a new season of life now in 2022, we are in a time of growing pains as the body of Christ. Some of us are nowhere near ready to return to Worship in person and will remain Worshiping online. Some of us have put online Worship out of mind, and will only Worship in person. Some of us will do both, attending online and in person on different Sundays.

As we navigate this diversity of experience among our congregation, it can be easy to forget that through all of this, we have been making connections and experiencing sources of resurrection and new life that we never could have expected. Here's a story of new life that touched my heart this month:

I received a phone call this summer from a local teenager and his mother, explaining that he would like to be baptized. He was hungry for the words of forgiveness spoken at the font, for the promises of eternal life and Christ's enduring and resurrecting love. He was nervous about being baptized with a crowd of strangers present, but he had been to our Church a long time ago, was connected to us through online Worship unbeknownst to us, and was asking for grace to be poured over him.

On the evening of Sunday, July 3, I gathered in our Sanctuary with Nick, his mother, and a family friend, both his baptismal sponsors. As I washed his forehead with the waters of eternal life, I called him "Nick, child of God." As his forehead was marked with fragrant oil he was sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. As a baptismal garment he received a comforter made by women from our own congregation, a sign that even though we were not all there with him that day, we would be committed to praying for him and be a safe place for him to land.

When Nick and his baptismal entourage exited the Sanctuary that night, I was floored by how seriously and powerfully I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit in that place. This was the first baptism I have presided over at Faith United.

This is why we do what we do, beloved siblings in Christ. Our faith, our discipleship in Jesus' name, our online Worship, our invitation to others, we are called to all of it so that we might have the great joy and privilege of welcoming others into the grace that Christ has poured out for them on the cross. **This is the future of Faith United, and the future of Christ's church—it is in inviting, extending a welcome, and making room for others that we will experience the new life of Jesus Christ in our midst.**

If you are one who Worships online at Faith United, I rejoice at your continued (or new) connection to our congregation. Even at home, you are a part of us, and your gifts and skills are needed in this place. If you are one who Worships in person at Faith United, the same is true. Consider prayerfully how God might be calling you to be connected to this place of Worship for Christ's sake, and how God might be calling you to extend an invitation to a friend, neighbor, coworker, or even stranger to come to Church and experience good news.

And finally, please join me in praying for Nick, child of God, as he embarks on this new journey of faith.

*In Christ's Resurrecting Hope,
Pastor Marissa Becklin*

