

From Pastor Marissa Becklin

Worshiping On Vacation

When I was a child, my family spent a decent number of weekends each summer camping. We had tents and later a pop-up camper (a major upgrade!), and made a commitment to spending as much time as possible outside together each year. This meant that we were away from church a number of Sundays. We learned how to look for local churches while traveling, and soon the tradition of visiting different churches on camping Sundays became a cherished family memory together.

As Lutherans we often joke about not liking change, and even though I'm convinced that this is true of all human beings (not just Lutherans!), the vacation opportunity to worship somewhere new can be a real blessing to us. When we are comfortable and used to the context that we worship in, we can forget what it felt like to be new somewhere. The experience of being a visitor is a holy one—it gives us the chance to be greeted anew by the body of Christ, and it makes us more aware of the concerns, fears, discomforts, and needs of the visitors that we might encounter as hosts in our own congregation.

Beyond this, when we experience worship in another context it can widen our understanding of what's possible in worship. It might even expose us to new songs, new liturgical settings, or new images of God. When you bring these joys back to Faith United, it gives us the opportunity to experience new life in community together. Sometimes we learn to be brave and try new things by seeing them go well in other places!

Finally, the greatest joy of worshiping while on vacation is that it reminds us that we are far from alone in our Christian life. Beyond our own congregation and local community, worshiping with others in new contexts exposes us to the diversity, depth, and breadth of Christ's body on Earth.

When I was in Cambridge, England in April, I worshiped at Greater St. Mary's Anglican Church on Sunday morning. There were no Lutheran options that day, and our denomination is in full communion with the Anglican church, so I arrived knowing that our denominations respect, support, and pray for one another. Thanks to the Revised Common Lectionary, the lectionary that many mainline Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic church follow, I was able to hear the same readings that Sunday as you heard (five hours earlier, thanks to the time difference). I heard a sermon preached on the same text that you did, I took Holy Communion and was spiritually connected to you as we shared a table across the ocean, and I received the same blessing that you did as I left worship.

This is one of the most incredible things about the holy day of Sunday in our life as Christians: by the time we gather for worship on Sunday, the eastern hemisphere of the world has already been keeping vigil for us. Even before we go to sleep on Saturday night, Christians in Australia are already gathering for worship. As we sleep Christians worship in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and in Europe. We take on the role of worship when it's our turn, at the same time as others in the Eastern US, Canada, Mexico, and South America, and as the day goes on the work goes to those who live farther West than us. Sunday, from beginning to end, is observed faithfully by a great chorus of global voices, and when we worship at other churches while on vacation, we get to practice taking on a different part of the song.

This summer there will be a map at the back of the Sanctuary where you are invited to put a pin on the places where you worship this summer. I hope that in September we will see a beautiful map of all of the places that Faith United carried the gospel this summer, and all of the places we received good news to bring back home with us. **Additionally, if you're worshiping online, please send me an email (pastormbecklin@gmail.com) so that I can put a pin on the map for wherever you worship online this summer!**

If you're looking for help finding a place to worship this summer, there is a great tool on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's webpage. By going to elca.org and clicking "Find a Congregation" near the top of the page, you can then enter a zip code or city and state where you are looking for a place to worship. All of the ELCA churches in that area will be listed, along with links to their webpages to find out information about worship times. **If you need help finding a place to worship on vacation, I will always be glad to help you out—please just ask!**

In Christ, Pastor Marissa