

Good morning!

Next Sunday has been designated by the Board as 'Grubby Sunday'! Wear your grubby clothes, bring a rake or whatever, gloves and energy! We will begin at 8:30. If it's a nice day, we even do the service outside.

Thursday, I have a meeting in Bristol for the Pemaquid Peninsula Cooperative Ministry (Connie and Sally! or whomever would like to get involved! Bristol is talking about an ecumenical Vacation Bible School for the Peninsula. Any thoughts? Also discussion on the anti-racist initiative that is bubbling up on the Peninsula.

The meeting is at 3:00. I can be in the office earlier if anyone would like to get together.

There was a lot of discussion at the last Annual Meeting about the process of nominating officers and committees at the Church. PLEASE! We are seeking a new Nominating Chair! Let me know if you would be interested.

We are also seeking a Leader for Union Church and South Bristol in the Crop Walk to be held at Bristol Mills Congregational Church.

We celebrated the presence of many we have held in prayer: Viola Glendinning, Earl Wright, Kathy Norberg.

Sunday we celebrated the lives of my mother, Jane Nutting, Jane Sandler and Cole William, Bill's grandson as they celebrate birthdays this week.

We also began to celebrate the return of our friends who left for winter as Charlie and Barbara Hughes led off.

We continue to hold in prayer Donna, Geri, Maude, Janet, Dick Miller, Jean and Bill Turner.

Sunday's message was a little different as I wanted to share my past week at the conference at the University of the South in Sewanee, TN, "Becoming Conscious: Rebirth of Soul Through the Wisdom of the Enneagram. This is the basics of what I said. I expanded in several instances. It was a wonderful opportunity and one I would be happy to share. Are you interested in a study group on the enneagram?

**GOSPEL** John 10:22-30

**NEW TESTAMENT** Acts 9:36-43

We have heard Your voice, Lord. You have spoken to us plainly. We will follow You as You guide us on the right paths. We will respond to You, as You open our hearts and minds and fill us with life in all its fullness. Hear our prayer, Lord in the name of the Savior.

**MESSAGE** *Soul Child*

Pastor Beth Hood

Have you ever noticed that when something is on your mind, there are reminders of it everywhere?

During Lent, we reflected on who we are-individually and as a church. We studied David Ray's books on 'small church'. And I found a new mantra, 'church without a mission is a club.'

I frequently hear the lament, 'where are all the young people?' Young people today are not going to be drawn to liturgy and hymn singing. Studies show they are not drawn to the 'mega churches' with their glitz and glamor. No, to attract young people we need to be relevant.

We need a mission. Ideally, our mission will flow naturally from who we are as individuals and as a community of faith.

So I don't think it was happenstance that I saw an announcement on facebook about three weeks ago about a conference happening at the University of the South. That's the university through which I took Education for Ministry. The conference was on "Becoming Conscious: Rebirth of Soul Through the Wisdom of the Enneagram."

There is a theme in this morning's readings. There is no more beautiful and perfect description of a life lived in harmony with God than the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. The Lord is indeed our shepherd as Jesus explains in John 10. The Good Shepherd cares for the sheep, brings an end to suffering, and fulfills the promise of eternal life as shown by Peter in Acts.

You see what I mean? If it's on your mind, it's everywhere!

Have you heard the story about the three year old little boy whose parents brought his new baby sister home from the hospital. After they put the new baby to bed, they saw the little boy go into her room. They stood outside the door to see his reaction to his new sister. And this is what they heard. "I'm so glad you're here! Hurry and tell me about God, I'm beginning to forget."

Deep within each of us is a little child. This child is our first self-our real self-and forms the essential makeup of our soul. Everyone's soul child is unique, just as each flower, snowflake, tree, or animal is different from all the others of its kind. Uniquely expressing God, this inner child is fully transparent to the Divine.

That soul child is at the center of the Enneagram.

"Then God said, "Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; ...God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them."

We come to earth as our soul child. Fresh from heaven, we were linked to the Divine unconscious of any separation between us and God. Without being immersed in thought, our soul child simply expressed three divine aspects of God: overflowing love, Divine intelligence and immortal being. A child knows no other way to live except by being an embodiment of these three properties.

In babies and very young children divine innocence and purity are evident. Just look into the eyes of children to see the soul child shining fully and freely. The light of pure consciousness can be seen in the very young who have not yet been 'introduced' to the darkness of the world.

Imagine a brilliant gemstone, shining in the heart of a being. Year by year, as the child experiences the world, wounding and pain occur. The brilliance begins to dim, the edges become chipped and ragged. An emerging ego becomes a protective covering for the vulnerable soul child.

Eventually, we long for the days when things seemed uncomplicated, and when we lived with joy and contentment. When we abandon the compulsions of our egos, our true selves can reawaken. Jesus spoke of this self-remembering, reintegrating our soul child when he said, "Truly I say unto you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Reuniting with the soul child makes a new creation, which is a combination of one's pure essence with the wisdom gained from suffering. Living out of this new creation brings consciousness of the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus pointed to this awareness throughout scripture.' He knew the ego is involved in self, in fear, and in gratification of the image of self. He knew we could not find the present moment of peace and stillness if we let the ego run our lives. He saw even then how the ego mind destroyed people by literally taking them away from beauty, love, joy, playfulness, openness to God, and all of the fruits of the spirit. He reminded people to once again 'consider the lilies,' 'become like little children,' 'lighten your burden,' 'do not worry,' and 'have life abundantly.'

The most definitive sermon for Christianity, the Sermon on the Mount, was delivered by Jesus and recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. Ground-breaking and radical, this sermon outline a new way to live different from any lifestyle then practiced up to that point in history. This sermon began with a series of nine blessings that Jesus gave to nine different types of people.

The Beatitudes offered a way to rise above the negativities of the day, and to find the reward of happiness 'now' in a most unexpected direction.

Today, the Beatitudes do the same thing. They bless us 'now' for daring to reach beyond ourselves for the betterment of ourselves and for others, for working to bring to light, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."