

Tuesday Reflection for September 1, 2020

## A Group Covenant

*Romans 12:9-21*

*<sup>9</sup>Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; <sup>10</sup>love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup>Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. <sup>13</sup>Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. <sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. <sup>17</sup>Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup>If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup>Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup>No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

You may recognize that this passage was our second reading this past Sunday. As I was studying this scripture I came across a comment by Rochelle Stackhouse, that this passage, "would function brilliantly as a group covenant for any gathering of people of faith." A group covenant!!! What a wonderful idea to consider as we are in the process of discovering what our community of faith would look like if our three congregations voted to officially come together. I have routinely done group covenants for confirmation classes, retreats, and youth gatherings. I never really thought about having a group covenant for a whole community of faith.

Stackhouse refers to a group covenant as a tapestry in which the warp, the ideals presented above, would be woven with the weft, which would be everyone's gifts and talents. The imagery is beautiful, that our combined community of faith would become a tapestry for Bethlehem and beyond. We have the freedom to develop and weave our tapestry together, making it uniquely our own. Combining elements of who we were, who we are, and who we endeavor to become.

If you were the artist, what would be the most important ideals to begin to weave into warp? Love would be first and foremost for me. Loving one another as God first loved us. Then expanding that love to everyone we meet. Incorporating love into our every action, our every encounter, our every ministry. Even those who we do not like, even those who look and act different than us, truly extending love for all. Can you imagine how that might change our city? If love guided our actions, if we never thought we knew more than we did, if we outdo one another in love and service. Wow!!! So many possibilities to spread God's love.

I encourage each of us to think about what we would put in a group covenant as we come together as one community of faith. How do we want our tapestry to look? What colors would we weave together? What will our ministries look like? How will we weave in the best of each congregation and individual? Take a moment with me today and dream. I am praying that together we will weave a beautiful tapestry that glorifies God in all its diversity and richness.

In Peace,

Pastor Suzanne