

Beloved Community

Gracious God,

May these words reflect your love and connection to each of us. Help us connect to one another more powerfully.

Yesterday, I just had to have something other than my spinach smoothie. So I ran around the corner to Burger King. There is a cashier there that I see whenever I go. I asked her, "How much longer will you all be able to stay open?" Tears welled up in her eyes. "I don't know. But I live pay check to paycheck and I don't know how I am going to make it." I wanted to jump out of the car and give her a hug. Now I hold her in deep prayer as I do many each day.

As Christians it is important for us to ask what it means to be a community in the midst of a time of ISOLATION and SOCIAL DISTANCING. The idea of BELOVED COMMUNITY came to us through a man named Royce. But, it was Martin Luther King, Jr who made the image popular. And it is an important image. He ached for a community of equity and justice. And his aim was to build the kin- dom of God. KIN- as the southern expression for family." Ya'll we are all kin. And as kin we are there for each other."

Family stands with each other.

We stay up through the night and wait for someone we love to come home safe and sound.

We cook meals for each other that bring back great memories

We stand for each other.

We weep together. We laugh at the silliest of things together.

We disagree and then then forgive each other

We love beyond measure.

That is what it means to be KIN to one another

Dorothy Day, the founder of the Catholic Worker's Movement remembered her whole life the huge San Francisco Earthquake that happened when she was a child. What stuck with her was the ways that folks, who never had spoken to each other in their lives, would go out of their way to help each other. She saw one person right after another be selfless as they cared for each other. Her question was – Why can't we treat each other like this every day? And that influenced the way she lived her life.

Our lives are to be compassionate and selfless as we connect and care for one another.

The beloved community is about love and it is about being connected as community.

1. We are loved by God because God created us with unique diversity. Feel that love pour over you. Experience that love within you. But that love is not something to be processed. It is to

be given to others. Love is not just a romantic emotion that makes you sigh and your palms sweat. Love is much deeper and wider than that. It is a live style and action of compassion and kindness based on the fact that we are kin.

2. We are connected as one people through the Holy Spirit. The spirit weaves herself around us and brings us energy to be one in the spirit.
3. God lets us know that we are not alone. We have each other to lift us up in hard times. And we are called to look at the world around us- seeing the joy and brokenness of Christ. And we are inspired to be there for each other. And ultimately God is our rock and our companion who journeys with us.
4. As different as we may be, we are still one. We are still kin.

There is a story in Krista Tippett's book- BECOMING WISE about a protest in South Carolina. South Carolina was reeling from the murders inside an African American church. Their grief, prayers for the shooter and forgiveness was confusing to many. Then the Confederate flag was removed from the State capitol. There were protests. An African American police officer, LeRoy Smith, was there as one of the officers who was to keep the peace. It was hard to just stand there and see all the hate from white supremacist. He then noticed an older man in the mass of white protesters who looked like he was going to pass out... The officer rushed over to him and scooped him up to find a seat for him. This made the news. How could that officer have the grace to care for a man who was spewing rage against him? The officer stated again and again that all he saw was a man who needed help. LeRoy Smith was asked, "Why has the picture of your act of kindness touched people?" He replied, "LOVE. People are aching for love." Let's make acts like this less of a surprise. Let's make it a norm --- Let's declare that the kin-dom of God is being built here and now even in the scariest of times in our midst.

So reach out to one another –

Call each other and bring light into someone's day

Offer to pick up groceries for someone who can't get out

Pray for our world

Stand up for those who lose their jobs and help them get through the day

Be there for one another. WE need each other more than ever during this time of uncertainty and confusion. Stand firm, listen for God and then go forward, as kin in Christ.