

A New Beginning...

I speak to you in the name of he who Is, who Was, and who is Yet To Come. PBS

This is the first week for many things...

The first week of the Season of Creation which goes from the 1st of September to the 6th of October.

The first week of Shared Ministry between Christ Church Anglican, Knox United Church and the Rev'd Andrea Brennan.

The first week of new service times for both Churches...9:00 am for Christ Church and 11:00 am for Knox.

The first week of me figuring out how much time it takes to get out of vestments at Christ Church, get to Knox and get vested again. Your patience is appreciated.

The first week of reality in what we have been talking about and working towards for, what feels like, a very long time. And here we are.

The theme for this week is Ocean. When you think of an ocean, what words come to mind?

[powerful, salty, waves, danger, peace, home etc.]

I was born in a landlocked, flat part of the world. The ocean was something very far away, something I learned of only in my memory. Nearly 26 years ago I went to England and saw "the sea" and it was mesmerizing. More than 14 years ago I went to Newfoundland and saw the ocean. It was positively majestic. And really cold. I went in February.

For many of you, I suspect, you have seen the ocean many times. "The coast" is not that far from here. How many of you were raised near the ocean?

In the first reading today, God is speaking to Job. Job has been lamenting his terrible fate at the hands of an unseen enemy. What Job doesn't realise that is that he's a pawn in a game of chess between God and Satan. Satan has bet God that he can get any person to refute God. God accepts the challenge and names Job. At first the stakes are that Job himself cannot be harmed. So Satan kills all of Job's livestock. Then his crops. Then his children. And through all of this Job asks "Why me?" but never condemns God.

We begin the story towards the end of the book of Job. Job has been lamenting that life is not fair and questions why is he being treated this way. Elihu, a companion of Job has rebuked Job and warned him that God is almighty and merciful. God is to be feared. Then God shows up, in response to Elihu. Chapter 38, Verse 2 "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me".

Let me paint you a picture. In part one of the chess match between God and Satan, God says that Job himself cannot be harmed. When Job does not refute God after his livestock, crops and children are killed, Satan wants to raise the stakes. Can Job be harmed? Yes, replies God, but not killed.

So Satan inflicts Job with sores all over his body. I imagine they would be like shingles. Itchy, inflamed, sore. Job is sat, in a pile of ashes, wearing little to no clothing because he's so sore. He's scratching himself with a potsherd, literally, a shard of pottery and feeling quite miserable about things. Then God shows up. "Gird your loins" he's told. In modern language "put on your big boy pants and stand up".

God questions all of what Elihu has said, reinforcing that God IS all. All of creation came from God. The earth, the seas, the living creatures; above the earth, on the earth and below the earth. Let's leave Job there this week. We'll come back to him next week.

The Psalmist speaks also of Creation, "yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it". Ever seen a Leviathan? Neither have I, but I imagine it to be a large, fearsome creature that perhaps plays with sailors and their ships.

In the Gospel we hear of Jesus calling the first disciples. Simon Peter, also known as Peter, is coming back after a long night of fishing and catching nothing. He's tired, he's hungry and a tad cranky. Jesus is on shore as Simon Peter and his fishing partners James & John come in with their boats. Jesus climbs into Simon Peter's boat and asks him to set out a little way from shore. Then he begins teaching.

When he finishes, he says to Simon "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Now, you can't fault Simon Peter. He's been fishing all his adult life. He's been out all night. He responds to Jesus "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets".

And what happens? More fish than he can lift alone. Even with James and John both boats are in danger of sinking, and their nets of breaking because there is so much fish.

So of course, Simon Peter is a little embarrassed and says "Go away from me for I am a sinful man". And Jesus, knowing all of what Simon Peter is feeling, tells him not to be afraid. Jesus says "from now on you will be catching people".

And just like that, Simon Peter, James and John follow him, leaving everything behind.

How many of you have ever been fishing?
How many of you have ever been fly-fishing?

When I lived in Waterloo, Ontario I went fly-fishing with a man I worked with and his two sons. It took me a while to get the hang of it, yet once I did it was incredibly meditative. You cannot be thinking about anything else while casting to fly fish or you'll get tangled, which I did A LOT. The rhythm is important, letting out the line, moving the rod, keeping your arm moving, keeping the line aloft. And when everything is moving together perfectly, it's time to cast the line.

If you do it well, the lure will skitter upon the surface of the water like a fly skittering across, and you'll catch a fish.

I never did catch a fish because I never had a hook on my line. Only a small lead weight. I wasn't interested in catching fish, only in learning to cast the reel.

Oceans are powerful and majestic. They can be frightening and awe-inspiring. I have not been swimming in an ocean, I need to learn to swim before I can do that. I have been swimming in a lake, in a pool and in a pond. Not an ocean...yet.

We are embarking on an incredible new adventure: the United and Anglican Churches of Fernie are daring to imagine ministry in a new way.

We will formalize this ministry with a Covenanting Service on the 29th of September. We will gather at Knox at 10:30 to begin the service. Bishop Lynne McNaughton will preach and the readings will be for Francis of Assisi. We will have a joint choir who will sing an Anthem "Here I am Lord". We will then process to Christ Church where Kathy Davies will present symbols of the covenant. We share and join together in Communion. Then we will enjoy a pot luck lunch together.

The purpose of this shared ministry is not to erase the Anglican and United Church identities, but to preserve them. We may worship in different ways, yet we both worship God. We may not use the same prayers, or words of institution, yet we both believe in Creation and give thanks to the one who Created us.

The Season of Creation is a perfect time for us to join together as we can look at readings that speak of fellowship, majesty, discipleship, and love. The themes of Creation, Year C are Ocean, Flora & Fauna, Storm and Cosmos. We will share times of calm and times of storm together. Yet if we commit to deepening our relationship with God and each other, we will be able to weather the storms.

It won't always be easy; being a follower of Jesus is not always easy, yet it is so worth the work. Making the commitment to walking together will bring us closer to each other, and closer to the Divine. It will mean we will listen to each other, work together to bring about the kingdom of God. We will laugh together, cry together and worship together.

In short, we will change the world together. One heart at a time. One soul at a time. One Sunday at a time. One day at a time.

I cannot do it alone. Please will you join me?

Let all God's children say Amen. (3X)
AMEN!

The Rev'd Andrea L. Brennan, Incumbent
Christ Church Anglican and Knox United Church, Fernie BC

Creation 1C – Ocean Sunday
Job 38.1-18
Psalm 104.1-9, 24-26
Ephesians 1.3-10
Luke 5.1-11