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The Chapel of St. James the Fisherman, Wellfleet

Think Globally - Act Locally
St. James the Fisherman Outreach Sunday
August 11, 2019

One of the things that I like to do in the summer is to catch up on my reading. This past week, I have been reading Richard Power's amazing book *The Overstory*. In it, the author describes a seven-year-old boy as one who "knows that most of the world is a present for him."

Have you considered the Outer Cape and our ability to reside or vacation here, as a gift? That's how I think of it. It is an extraordinary honor and gift to serve as priest and pastor of St. James the Fisherman. I feel that, with you, I'm a steward and keeper of one of God's most holy places.

I also consider it an amazing gift to spend summers on the Outer Cape. All those years of reading Henry Thoreau, Henry Beston, Marge Piercy, and Mary Oliver have come true.

Every morning, I look out at the water and give thanks for this beautiful and fragile landscape. I also give thanks for my neighbors who work so hard as stewards and keepers of this place:

- The shellfish men and women who harvest our oysters, clams, lobsters and mussels
- The deep sea fishermen and women who bring us bluefish, striper, tuna and swordfish
- The farmers who raise our fruits and vegetables and sell them in the local markets
- The bakers who make our bread and blueberry muffins
- The cooks, waiters and dishwashers who work in our local restaurants
- The shopkeepers and drivers who stock, sell and deliver items to meet our every need
- The women and men who clean up after us
- The cashiers who ring up our groceries at the market
- The yoga and exercise teachers who stretch our bodies
- The doctors, nurses and vets who take care of us when we're sick
- The painters, sculptors, musicians and artists who feed our spirits
- The lifeguards, police officers, firefighters and EMT's who keep us safe

For this place and all these people, I offer thanks. But that's not enough. As the prophet Micah says to the seeker who asks what is required of her, God has told you what is good and what is required: do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God. Do, love, and walk are action verbs that demand we get off of our donkey and help our neighbors.

The New Testament writer of James reminds us, faith without works is dead. When we live out those baptismal promises, "They will know we are Christians by our love." Paraphrasing this old camp song: when we work with each other, when we work side by side, we will guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride.

Thus, In our baptismal covenant, we promise to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God, to seek and serve Christ in all persons, to love our neighbors as ourselves, to strive for justice

and peace among all people, and to respect the dignity of every human being. The Christian faith is not just a head thing; it involves the heart and hands in a call to action.

With so much facing our nation and our world - climate change, gun violence, sex trafficking, detention and deportation, the growing gap between rich and poor, and bigotry and hatred all running rampant in the public square - It's hard to figure out what to do - what action to take.

Being a Christian in today's world is really about thinking globally and acting locally. We need to be informed about the big picture; we can't remain blissfully ignorant. We also need to engage with others to solve those big, complicated issues. An important step is to take meaningful action in our own communities.

Matthew's Jesus makes it really clear. When we feed, shelter, clothe, visit, and advocate for our brothers and sisters in need, we feed, shelter, clothe, visit and advocate for Christ himself.

For most of our 60 years in Wellfleet, this Chapel has been committed to the practice of showing our love for our neighbors by supporting programs and services that benefit the lives of year-round residents and seasonal workers on the Cape. We aim every year to donate 50% of the offerings we receive directly to groups that support those in need on the Outer Cape.

In 2018, we gave nearly \$30,000 to the following organizations active in Wellfleet, Truro, Provincetown, and Eastham:

- 246 Kitchen
- Alzheimer's Family Support Center
- Cape Abilities
- Community Development Partnership
- Dexter Keezer Fund
- Habitat For Humanity of Cape Cod
- Helping Our Women
- Homeless Prevention Council
- [Hope Hospice
- Lower Cape Outreach
- Mustard Seed Kitchen
- Outer Cape Health
- Wellfleet Audubon
- Wellfleet In Need

These are people and programs that serve those who live with physical, mental and spiritual challenges: isolated and lonely seniors who need help, support, and companionship; workers who can't afford Cape housing costs; abused women who have nowhere else to turn; the sick and injured who require medical care on the outer Cape; the hungry who need food; local children and youth who can't afford summer camp; year-round residents who need energy assistance in the middle of the winter; and those living with dementia.

Yesterday, we hosted our second “Outreach Sunday” so that we might learn more about the ongoing needs of local residents and seasonal workers and the services provided by various social agencies to meet those needs. After listening to the sacred texts (Micah, James and Matthew 25), our community outreach partners stood in a sacred circle around God’s table and told us about the social service needs of year-round residents and seasonal workers on the Outer Cape and what they are doing to address those changing needs. After they spoke, our chapel warden, Darcy Hackert, announced that our fund raising had exceeded our budget, and the vestry had voted to award an additional \$500 to each organization. It was a delightful surprise. Before and after worship, the patio bustled with agency exhibits and lively conversations.

Dorothy Bass has written that Christian practices are shared patterns of activity in and through which life together takes shape over time in response to and in the light of God as known in Jesus Christ. Woven together, they form a way of life.

Supporting these agencies on the Outer Cape is one concrete way for this Chapel to practice our collective faith and to remind each and every one of us of our baptismal obligation to do the same. It is also a way of saying thanks for the gift of this place and those who keep it running. I hope that this generosity will continue for years to come.

Question for Reflection: How are you thinking globally and acting locally?