

**The Waiting is the Hardest Part**  
**The Monroe Congregational Church, UCC**  
**The Rev. Jennifer Gingras**  
**April 19, 2020**

*Acts 1:1-14*

I feel like I've lived my entire adult life in week long increments. For nearly three decades now I have been saying to myself, *"If I can just make it until Monday, things are going to slow down, and then I will get back to real life."*

Come to think of it, I'm probably the only one who feels that way about Mondays.

Anyway, so the next week gets here, and some things I intended to do are finished, and some relationships have been strengthened, and some things that were broken have been fixed.

But in the meantime, a whole new basket of worries and chores and unreturned phone calls have sprung up in their place.

It's like playing whack-a-mole. But it's whack a chore!

BAM clean the dishes

BAM pay the bills

BAM change the light bulb that always goes out

BAM call back the person I meant to call back but forgot about twice

BAM how is there already more dishes? There's always somehow more dishes...

Much like a overfilled laundry machine, it's an overwhelming cycle

That's my normal. But now, it seems we've got a new normal. Because when we layer on the uncertainties of the pandemic, and what we all imagine life will be like a week from now is hard to say exactly!

Will we be in the same place we are today? Or somewhere totally different? Will my chickens go on strike because my daughter won't give them privacy to lay an egg? We won't know.

Maybe it'll still be kind of quiet. That's what I hope for, at least. Maybe we'll take time for prayer or play or sleep or take a walk in nature or help out a neighbor. Maybe we'll learn a new language like Gwennyth Paltrow suggested.

(not likely... the closest I'm getting to that goal is Pig Latin, so Clark and I can talk in code around the kid... she's always listening!).

Maybe we'll all be a little more efficient or work some things out with the people we love. Silver linings, amIright?

Or maybe, (and hear me out), maybe a week isn't long enough to see any real sustained change – in my life, or the lives of those I love, or in our communities.

Think about it, a week is only 10,080 minutes. That's only enough time to listen to the song "the general" by dispatch 2,520 times! Which may sound like a lot, but think about how little else you'll get done listening to that song 24/7. And while a week may be long enough for God to create the universe, we're not God, nor should we think we are.

I'm sure that you've heard of Pentecost, the church feast-day we hope to celebrate together at the end of May, just as the seasons change from Oh Yay! It's warm out today to oh, bummer it's warm out today.

On the day of Pentecost, we are told that the followers of Jesus received the gift of the Holy Spirit. From this point on, as the story goes, they had power like Jesus, and all they would need to do is say his name and they could make paraplegics walk, make the blind see, restore those who struggle with mental illness to health and community.

After Pentecost, the apostles began to let women lead, they held all their wealth in common so that none were poor, and they saved life after life after life after life. In the words of Acts, they were "*turning the world upside-down.*" This is Pentecost. And it's coming to us in about 43 days. This may sound like a long time, but it's really only 15,480 "The General's". Can't wait.

But there's another traditional feast day that doesn't seem to get the same kind of attention, maybe because we're focused on other things, it's called the feast of the Ascension.

The Ascension, we're told, happened a full ten days before Pentecost, and it remembers Jesus Christ's rising bodily in a cloud into heaven before the amazed eyes of his disciples. Could you imagine seeing this happen? The disciples see their dear friend and teacher crucified, then rose from the dead! But then just 40 days later, he rose into the sky, like a far more

graceful airplane, and disappeared. They were all probably like, uhhh bro what?

So, forty days after Easter, Jesus left the disciples for good.

And fifty days after Easter, the Holy Spirit arrives to confer upon them the power to heal and preach and feed in the same way that Jesus did.

In the meantime, there are those ten days.

Ten days for the disciples to wonder: what do we do now? What can we do now? With Jesus gone, and the Spirit not yet arrived on shift, did they wonder if they had any power, any ability, any hope to do anything on their own?

And are we anything without him?

In a world where recommendations on social distancing seem to change every ten days or so, waiting here in the in-between, on our own, just feels like ordinary life. Much like the waters of the ocean, changing tides are normal.

Each one of us knows what it is like to have to wait to see how things play out, having no control over the outcome...

Like when you take a chance and say those three little words - I Love You - and you wait and wonder if you'll hear them back.

The exam has been taken, but the grade has not yet been recorded.

The ball has been thrown, but the dog has not yet returned.

The blood has been drawn, but the test results have not come back.

The application has been sent, but no envelope, either big or small, has yet arrived in the mail.

The prayers have been said outside of the hospital window, and now you are clanging around at home, waiting to hear news from the doctor.

The chemo trial has started. The pregnancy test is positive. Hospice has been called, now all we can do is wait.... wait... wait.

There is nothing you can do to make the next thing happen that you want to happen.

You can't make her love you. You can't make him healthy. You can't change the fact that all the jam has been sold out by the time you arrive at the strawberry festival at 11am on Saturday? Wow people work fast!

This sounds suspiciously like the situation those disciples were in as they were trying to pull themselves together after the resurrection. He told them what to do right before he ascended: go to Jerusalem. Hang out there and wait for God to deliver the Holy Spirit. In other words, don't make any plans, for now. Just go and be together. Binge some Tiger King. Download Tik Tok. Do a jigsaw puzzle together. Hunker down. Wait.

And that is exactly what the disciples do. They went back to Jerusalem, back to that upper room where they were used to meeting with Jesus. Taking the stairs one creaky step at a time. They pile into that upper room: Peter and John and Bartholomew; Mary Magdalene and Mary Cleopas and the mother of Jesus, and probably another Mary too.

It was crowded, maybe a little stinky from too little air and too much sweat. Like a van on the last day of the PF mission trip. They don't make plans when they arrive. They don't go and order takeout (or maybe they do, who knows, I hear they LOVE anchovy pizza!) They just pray and wait. And although it wasn't as dramatic as being taken up into heaven in a cloud, it was all they could manage at the time.

And something began to happen to them in that upper room. Made like him, like him they rose. The scriptures say they were all there: men and women, little old ladies and college kids, band geeks and jocks, hillbillies and city slickers - and they were constantly devoting themselves to prayer. Ten days later, they start turning the world upside down.

May it be so for us too, and may it be soon. Amen.