

Acts 1:6-14; Psalm 68:1-10, 33-36; 1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11; John 17:1-11

The Rev. Linda Spiers

Seventh Sunday of Easter – Year A – May 28, 2017

Trinity Episcopal Church

Let us pray.

“God of the redeeming moment
of the right people in the right places,
we pray to be attentive to your Spirit
so that we may be agents of your change;
full of steadfast purpose and holy action,
risk-takers in the face of apathy and death,
speakers of truth in the face of silence.
Jesus, grant us courage. Amen.”¹

That is the prayer for today in the *Thy Kingdom Come* resource *Nine Days of Prayer 2017: Conversations in the In-Between*. It’s one of the resources in the Narthex available for praying from the Ascension (May 25) through Pentecost (June 4)—the in-between time when Jesus ascended into heaven leaving the disciples with the promise they would not be left as orphans. They and we are not left comfortless. An advocate would be sent.

If you go to the *Thy Kingdom Come* website and pledge to pray during this time, you receive a daily message that says “Pray it—Picture it—Post it.”

¹ “Between Bystander and Game-Changer” in *Nine Days of Prayer 2017: Conversations in the In-Between*, Sunday, May 28, 2017, www.thykingdomcome.global

Each day includes two YouTube videos—very short, one more fitting for adults and one called the “bite-sized youth friendly film.” A word is given and a very brief and impactful reflection on the word. Our friends at the Society of St. John the Evangelist are partnering in this endeavor by sending a prayer mapped to the word for the day. It’s an engaging way to begin the day, and I still commend the practice to you.

I have also put another prayer resource in the Narthex inviting people to pray as our Province I Bishops embark on a 40-day pilgrimage: *Come to the River of Life: Connecticut River Pilgrimage 2017*. Some number of bishops and others will begin their pilgrimage on May 31 and continue paddling through July 9. They paddle beginning in Maine through Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut along the Connecticut River, led by two guides from Metanoia of Vermont. Their days will include the rhythm of prayer with Morning, Noonday, and Evening prayers and hymns and intentional spiritual disciplines to support “the awakening of life” with focus on three spiritual aspects:

- Present moment awareness and non-resistance to life (“practicing an attitude of unconditional acceptance of the present moment as it is.”)
- Sensory awareness
- Contact with matter and wild Creation

They leave behind all technology and spend their days laced in prayer and on the water calling to mind the words of Ezekiel "...where the river flows, everything will live." (Ezekiel 47:9).

Participants will use a Prayer Book specifically designed for the pilgrimage and entitled *River of Life: 40 days of Prayer*. Prayer pilgrims are invited to pray along with them on land. We're all invited to a service and cultural festival on July 4, when the Hartford churches host the pilgrims at the Church of the Good Shepherd. These pilgrims will stop along the way for hospitality. There are a few copies of the prayer book for those who might wish to commit to intentional prayer with them.

Prayer is life-giving. We know prayer works and we don't know how it works. I believe we can't have too many prayers. Most of us have experiences with prayer when we've rejoiced at an outcome or found ourselves in utter disbelief, despair, and disappointment when the outcome is other than what our prayers expressed.

"Thy Kingdom Come" are words in the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. Jesus frequently went off to pray in the wilderness—we know of *his* 40 days in the wilderness. In the lesson from Acts we hear that the disciples and certain women including Mary and Jesus' brothers constantly devoted themselves to prayer. In John's Gospel we hear what is known as the Priestly Prayer. Jesus prays for his disciples and for us.

Jesus' prayer was said just before he and his disciples headed across the Kidron Valley toward the Garden of Gethsemane. It was hours before his crucifixion. Jesus prays about what he has taught the disciples and seals it with the words, "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one." (John 17:11). He prays that we become one with God *and* one with each other just as Jesus is one with God.

Jesus' life and ministry give us a window into God's love beyond understanding. It's a window that continues to be cracked open a little further throughout life for each of us. Our humanness sometimes gets in the way of our seeing clearly through that window. How we honor the other who may have different opinions, different views of life, different understandings becomes a pathway to the oneness that Jesus prays for us all. We are the beloved community just as those early disciples were the beloved community and just as Jesus was God's beloved.

Jesus prays for us all, "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one." It is a precious prayer for all of us as we continue discovering how to live as the beloved community in our time. I believe we are invited to pray along with Jesus and to find our way to enter the conversation with God in living our lives, in words of prayer, or in silence along a river.

Let us pray.

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