

## *God started it!*

*Joshua 24: 1-2a; 14-18 and John 6: 56-69*

God started it!

Over the last few weeks, I have been spending time with family; extended family that is. Those ones we don't always live with; those ones we don't always like but somehow God said, "They're yours." And I always get the God questions. My nephew calls me his Godparent because that is my job. Luckily my job isn't to answer the questions but just respect the fact that he has them. But lots of people do have them and who better ask than the United church minister. They are placed to in the middle of the dining room table with a: "So..."

The 3 questions most populated my summer discussions were *why* difference and *why* this diversity? *why* relationships? (Why do I have to have relationships in my life?) And lastly, why is it that there are rules in those relationships, expectations about how I treat people? Well, I say, God started it.

God first breathed into creation and made creation in God's image. And creation from its very beginnings meant diversity, relationship and rules. Because life started when there was more than one cell more than one atom. It got extra complicated when there was more than one kind of water, one kind of land, and soon there were way more than one kind of insect, bird, dinosaur, mammals, fish. And just when you thought it couldn't get more complicated God said, "Let there be humans." God started it.

This means that every time a new learning comes to us as an individual or a community and we look at it and it says to us, "It's more complicated than you thought," we can't say as Christians: Oh no, it is it's not complicated, there is a black and white, there was a good and a bad, there is a one and the other. Because God started it with more, with diversity. So, if you make a new learning and it makes your world more diverse and complicated, that was probably what God meant to do in the first place. Now humans are slow to get on to the diversity bandwagon as it were. We like things to be in boxes, we like things to be ordered. And *then* your twelve-year-old nephew looks at you and goes, "Auntie do you know that, like in the olden days, people thought there was, like, 2 genders? Only two, can you imagine?" (I didn't tell him what I learned in school because I didn't think I had gone to school 'in the olden days.')

So, I smiled and said, "Tell me more because I have so much to learn." But I kept remembering if it's more complicated, more diverse: God is a part of it.

Speaking of twelve-year-old nephews, being in relationship with anyone between the ages of 12 and well 16 or 18 depending ... is not easy. If you've had any experience, they don't wake up until the afternoon and when they do wake up they want food. Once they've eaten they then begin to communicate. Not with

the words that you spent the last 12 years teaching them. But with “Uh, meh, ah.” Words do come out when you say we're going to have a family night tonight, “we're staying in until midnight.” Then words (complaining) begin. Oh, relationships you can't live in them easily but, *the way God started it* - you cannot live without them. We are made to be in them. We are interdependent on one another and on creation's brothers and sisters.

Perhaps sometime over this summer you found yourself short of air, of actual oxygen. I had never experienced that bad of (air quality) smoke as when I was in British Columbia this summer. I thought, “I am so dependent on oxygen!” And, I don't often think that, I know that, but not being able to take a deep breath of fresh air especially when I was standing in Lake Louise...I was very humbled and realised my dependence on this world's health. We all are interdependent because God started it. God ensured that no human being would be born without other human beings being involved. We need each other, and it is not easy. Sometimes we want to isolate ourselves because of what's going on in the world outside, sometimes we want to isolate ourselves because of what's going on in our inner worlds. But, as Karen said, “a bucket sitting by itself cannot be filled.”<sup>1</sup>

And then there are the rules and again I have to say, “Sorry, but God started it.” The amazing thing about cells is that they have boundaries. And, the definition of healthy cell is a cell with boundaries. It is still interdependent on other cells. There are many kinds of cells, but healthy ones have boundaries. There have been guidelines passed down through the ages in every culture. Guidelines how we are to live together because we are diverse and interdependent. Sometimes this takes the form of rules, sometimes laws, sometimes taboos or traditions. In September, we are going to look at the commandments in Hebrew scriptures and the ones Jesus proclaimed. We are also going to look at the guidelines that guide us here at Robertson-Wesley. What happens when one of us crosses another's boundary or we find out that someone's been going around being a bucket dipper? How do we respond knowing we are interdependent, knowing that everyone has different needs how do we hold one another too healthy boundaries? What guidelines can we use?

God started the diversity thing and God started relationship dependence and God started the need for boundaries and guidelines. And then God did the weirdest thing of all.

God said: Go and do the same. And so, while God did start it, it is now up to us how we shall live in to it. How shall we learn about and celebrate diversity? How will we learn about interdependence, helping others, but also asking for help? And how will we treat one another through it all? What will be our guidelines? Life in diversity, in relationship, discerning together: God started it. And all the steps you take within it are Holy and Sacred, just like you. Thanks be to God and Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> This Sunday's “Coming Into God's Presence” including the telling of the great story by Carol McCloud and David Messing called *Have you filled a Bucket Today?*