

St. Thomas's Episcopal Church  
Newark, DE  
Seventh Sunday after Easter & Memorial Day Weekend – May 28, 2017/Year A  
Acts 1:6-14; Psalm 68:1-10, 33-36; 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11; John 17:1-11  
The Reverend Paul W. Gennett, Jr.

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*May my words reveal the greater glory of God in our risen Lord Jesus Christ  
AMEN*

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**Are we there yet?** Many parents might reflect fondly of this often backseat question asked by our children again, and again, and again, and ... Maybe not so fondly, and we may know a few adults in our lives that fit into this container as well.

**Are we there yet?** Just a mere thirteen months ago, I was sitting at my third Standing Committee meeting after my call and election at our diocesan convention in January. Meetings were mainly conversations by the bishop and the canon about activities and ministry we needed to be informed, but not to take action. There was not much heavy lifting **until then** ... At that April meeting, Bishop Wright announced he thought the time was right to retire as our bishop early in 2017. He was calling for the process to begin for election of the 11<sup>th</sup> bishop to Delaware to be led by the Standing Committee. **He thought it would be a good time to do this.**

**Are we there yet?** Then President Patty Downing was seated at the table directly across from me. Patty had plans all in place for the second part of a three month sabbatical to begin in June, as did I for a shorter six-week version of sabbatical time. Our look to one another spoke our unspoken words – **What the ??????** In May, the representative from the national church office joined our meeting. He gave us THE BOOK of all things necessary for the election of a bishop in our church. The flood gates opened as we absorbed as much as we could as quickly as we could. Then we began extra meetings to plan, pray, and discern staffing for committees. Then we called to invite those to serve on committees, pray, plan, to make more calls, pray. I say **pray** often because this was our mutual focus to walk WITH God in this process, and not RUN AHEAD of God's desires for this holy work, together.

**Are we there yet?** Now thirteen month have passed, and we are presented with a gifted, diverse, deeply spiritual and prayerful group of five very qualified people who have heard the call to stand for this election, to come and share with us the work of the Jesus Movement in Delaware. We will meet them all come the end of June, and then move to our Special Convention in July.

**BUT we are not quite there yet!** It is the very essence of our story this day, the Sunday after the Ascension, that along with our sisters and brothers who follow this One we call Jesus, **we pray.**

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Our scripture readings this day hold this tension for those disciples then and now. Jesus offers his “high priestly prayer” in the Gospel of John, preparing the disciples to go forth into the world in the Name of Jesus **ALMOST**. From the Acts of the Apostles, after Jesus ascended into heaven, the angelic direction is to get on with their ministry. They return to the upper room together. They return in prayer. They return to **are we there yet ... no, not quite yet**.

The Gospel reading is a continuation of the “high priestly prayer” from Jesus’ Farewell Discourse. Though the other Evangelists picture Jesus at prayer, only on rare occasion is the content of the prayer revealed. Jesus offers this prayer for his disciples on the night before his death, in which he asks for God’s continuing care for all who believe in him.

Therefore, Jesus prays that they remain united and their unity reflect the oneness of Jesus with God. The world needs the life of grace brought by his life and ministry. The disciples for whom Jesus prays then are the disciples Jesus prays for now, you and me. As our Lord prayed for and sent them INTO the world, so Jesus does for you and me now.

In the story from Acts, the disciples are gathered with Jesus in Jerusalem after the Resurrection. They know something important is to come **ALMOST but not quite yet**. So what do the disciples do when they are in that “in-between” place of knowing and not knowing, of **ALMOST but not quite yet – they ask Jesus questions to fill the uncomfortable silence!** They ask if NOW is the time when he will “*restore the kingdom of Israel.*” Although they were hoping for a clear time and place for the restoration of the Davidic throne, Jesus reminds them that the time of God’s plan for the Kingdom is known only by God!

What Jesus does tell them is the **personal transformation that can happen** to all who believe through the coming Holy Spirit. The Spirit will empower them to become the witnesses of the Good News to Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and to “*the end of the earth.*”

The thing the disciples do, maybe the only thing they can do, is to do what works as shown by Jesus time and again. **They rely on the power of prayer** and they return to the Temple where they were continually found “*blessing God.*” Luke says that the WHOLE Christian assembly – the disciples, certain women, Mary the mother of Jesus and his brothers – returned to Jerusalem, to the upper room “*constantly devoted themselves to prayer.*”

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We must come to embrace that **nothing will be quite the same ever again!** This is rarely a comfortable place for anyone to find themselves. Yet the power of the Spirit of our living God calls us to live in this holy discomfort by faith. again and again.

One of the gifts of our three year lectionary cycle is that I can look back to sermons preached on various Sunday’s in the church year, such as I did for this Seventh Sunday of Easter in 2014.

On that Easter 7 in 2011, I shared how **The Grove** was beginning to emerge into the reality of OUR calling to discern our participation and commitment to this gracious gift held by our diocese, or not. In July 2011, the first gathering of a group called to consider sharing their gifts and leadership in this discerning work came together. This leadership team took on the name **Forward in Faith**.

On Easter 7 Sunday in 2014, growing and glowing from the May 18<sup>th</sup> kickoff luncheon, we heard that **75%+** of our \$435,000 goal has been committed. Today, the Grove is fully paid for your future into Chapter 22, Page 175. With the present power of our loving God, our risen Lord Jesus, and the saints of 175 years of our history, we are now and will continue to be the witness in our days to the TRUTH of God's loving and living power through **our lives, our ministry, and our proclaiming faith here and now**.

Too often we get stuck in a paradoxical **time between times** of the first and second coming of Christ. In this two-thousand year stretch of transition ministry and expectation of Christ coming again "*in power and great glory to judge the earth*", **we are called** to carry on the mission that Jesus began. We are not to sit idly by twiddling our thumbs as an important part of this mission is to welcome the stranger as Jesus himself showed us how to do, since **the essence of our faith is expressed in community**. Sometimes the Church, and that is you and me, forgets that we are **called into** community. Without each other, we fall far short of the heaven-on-earth vision of **what we might be for each other**.

**Are we there yet?**

*AMEN*