

From Generation to Generation
[Texts -Exodus 3:9-15; Luke 10:1-11]

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When the ancient Israelites refer to God as “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” they’re talking about a Living, Holy “Other” - One who was, is, and always will be. And within this Ever-Living, Ever-Loving Presence, all that was and is, continues to be carried forward. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had long passed-away; yet from generation to generation they lived-on - in the memory and DNA of their descendants, AND in the everlasting memory and Presence of their Divine Source.

As you and I gather today, and every Sunday, we remember Jesus Christ - One who fully embodies Divine Love and Grace, and freely extends it to all people. Today, we also remember those faithful people whose lives and love touched and shaped - and continue to touch and shape - our own. Through our eating and drinking together of one Bread and Cup; through our *literally linking-together* in our concluding Circle of Blessing - you and I remember and celebrate both our human and our heavenly interconnectedness.

Last month, two longtime faithful members of the Church passed-away: Jim Kaul and Jan Rahnenfuehrer. And while their span of Church membership here was relatively short, the impact of their presence will continue to be felt from generation to generation. Even those who didn't know him well, felt uplifted and affirmed by Jim Kaul's wonderful smile and his warm and welcoming personality. His ability to remain positive and faithful in the face of on-going, ever-increasing health issues, is an inspiring example to us all. And even though Jan Rahnenfuehrer's heavy German accent was at times difficult to understand, his lighthearted joy, enthusiasm and faithfulness spoke loudly and clearly. I'll never forget how Jan would swing his hands and the hands of those beside him, singing "Halle, halle, halle-luja!" He would beam like a beautiful little child, as he looked around and smiled at the rest of God's children gathered here. I believe that the on-going ripple-effect of both Jan and Jim's positive and faithful lives can have a tremendously profound impact upon this world - far more powerful than we might ever imagine.

In the Divine scheme of things, one simple welcoming smile or one small gesture of kindness, can bring about remarkable results. Maybe that's why Jesus speaks so often about the importance of the little things in Life: the widow's small coin offered in faith; the cup of cold water given with compassion; those small acts of kindness done "to the *least* of these" our brothers and sisters. In the Divine Realm, our lives and our faith have an astonishing capacity to develop and grow - like the tiniest of mustard seeds. With time, and patience, and persistence, every small step forward that you and I take, brings us ever closer to fully reflecting the Divine Image of the Living, Loving Christ. And even in those times when it feels like our faith is dormant - or *dead* - it doesn't mean that it isn't deepening and growing and preparing to spring-forth in awesome and amazing ways.

Throughout the Scriptures, the Divine call to live a faithful life, is a Divine invitation to *action* - to do something positive, in response to a prior, Divine action. And when I think about *faith* as it's experienced and lived-out among this community, it's clearly evident that *faith* is much more about action than it is about words. When we serve our

Hunger Meals, we don't talk about Divine Grace with those people who gather. We do have a table "grace" before we eat, and we're certainly open to any conversations about God or faith that our guests might initiate. But our purpose isn't to talk about the gracious welcome of Jesus Christ; it's to graciously extend that welcome to those sisters and brothers who need our help. When you and I give to Our Church's Wider Mission, we help make a positive difference in other people's lives. And it doesn't matter whether those people are atheists, agnostics or Anglicans; whether they're from Brecksville or Bangladesh - you and I are responding to their needs, in grateful response to what the Holy One has already given us.

In the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, you and I are given a marvelous example of how to live freely and fully for the sake of others. Jesus' undying faith in Divine Love and Grace moves and empowers him to feed the hungry, heal the sick, lift-up the oppressed and welcome the outcast. Jesus' deep trust in his own Divine connection enables him to openly connect with others - particularly those "others" who don't fit the proper picture of religious respectability. Jesus' unshakable belief in the extravagant Nature of Divine Goodness and Compassion moves him to take *action* on behalf of those people who need it the most. And his faithful actions inspire and empower those who follow him to live and act and grow together as a faith-full community; one which even today continues to do remarkable things that encourage and enhance people's lives.

Today, you and I remember and celebrate the remarkable life of Jesus Christ, in the breaking of the Bread and the sharing of the Cup. We also remember and celebrate the wonderful lives of those wonderful people who told us about the God of Love, and who showed us the Love of God. As our Continuing Testament says, "Almost every argument in favor of God has its opposite argument.... When face-to-face with a believer, however, things are different. The existence of a person cannot be dismissed or refuted as easily as an argument can. That believer's clear existence raises the question: "If faith in God has shaped the life of that man or woman and made it authentic, cannot that same faith give authenticity and meaning to my life as well?"

Jim Kaul and Jan Rahnenfuehrer, Nancianne Martin and Lois Wallin, Skip Cook and Vic Szabo, Mildred Heinemann and Mildred Pfleger - the list goes on and on and on - just as the impact of all their faithful lives continues to live-on in you and me, and subsequently in the lives of all those who follow us. Our lives are intricately interwoven with those who come before and after us. Yet all of this is merely an inkling of the unbreakable link we have with our One Sacred Source - whose abundant, overflowing Life and Love connects us all, right now and forevermore.