

“Together, Still”
February 20th, 2022
Rev. Laurel Gray

So here we are. March 8th of 2020 until February 20th of 2022, a time that holds more than can be remembered at once. It's baffling, certainly not what I expected when we had that first virtual service about setting up altars at home, surprised and delighted that on zoom you all saw each other's faces, not the backs of each other's heads. I used two of my grandmother's china bowls taped together as a chalice for well over a year, you all settled into your couches and kitchen tables and car rides - across the necessity of physical distance, we found our way together each week.

When Meredith and Lisa and I led the service lady Sunday, I expected being in this sanctuary, standing at this pulpit after two years of kitchen table preaching, I expected it to be odd, stage-like after the intimacy of church from home.

But somehow it wasn't odd - we were all still ourselves doing what we've been doing all along, just standing with a bit more architectural grandeur, a bit more stained-glass history and tech-savvy anticipation.

After two years of seemingly constant change, our collective crash course in transmissibility and herd immunity and mask quality, two years of attuning from the days of bleaching our groceries to our obsession with waste water statistics, two years of isolation plus the collision of work and home and school and health and sickness - I suspect we all look a little older. And after two years of constant change, this is another: re-entering this place of community, this physical house.

Some of you have been wishing for this day for a long time - burnt out, understandably, on zoom -
some of you might feel sort of ambivalent about this transition, nervous about all that it holds, how to navigate it all,
and some of you are here in this place for maybe the first time because you found

this community in the midst of a pandemic.

The blessing is that there is room here for all of it, not only in the spacious comfort of this place, but in the unyielding wholeness of this community. Building or no building we never stopped being a community grounded in care - if anything the last two years required more clarity of mind, more tenderness and conviction and creativity than the before times.

As I said so frequently these last two years, we'll find our way together. And we have. We've found our way together, changed in ways we couldn't have imagined, and here we are: together, still.

Last week we focused on the goodness of embodiment, and I think I would be remiss if I asked you all to sit quietly in your pews while I talked at you from afar. Cynthia so beautifully led us in a time of filling this place with new life, and I want to take some time now for exploring this place, for letting it stir your memories and your hopes, your grief and the tenderness of new beginnings in an old place.

We're going to take five minutes now to do a walking meditation of the building. Scott is going to do his with a camera, so those of you at home can see, too. I invite you to let yourself wander in this place however you want. Maybe that means staying in your seat and noticing all the details around you, maybe it means finding your way to my office, or the classrooms where we've had Religious Education for so many years. I just ask that you stay silent and focus on noticing.

Kala will begin playing music when it's time for you to journey back to this place for candles of Joy and Sorrow.