

THE GIFT OF QUESTIONS

Easter 3 – Cycle B: Luke 24:36b-48

This homily prepared and introduced a presentation to our congregation by Pam Hill and Richard Walsh – part of our four-Sunday parish study on the full inclusion policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. Christ Church will vote on May 6 to ratify or not ratify the policy for local application.

For whatever reason, our lectionary, this year, misses Luke's account of the two disciples travelling to Emmaus, being joined by Jesus on the way, and then having him join them for supper where they recognize him, as Luke says, "in the breaking of the bread." Instead, this year, we jump forward in Luke's account to where Jesus joins all the disciples gathered in their house in Jerusalem, shortly after the two disciples from Emmaus arrive in from Jerusalem with their report that they have seen the Lord.

The disciples were, it is clear, full of questions. Luke tells us that they were startled and terrified when Jesus stood among them and offered them his peace. Jesus asks them about the fear and doubt he can see written all over them. Later, Luke says that even though they had accepted to a degree what was happening, there were still disbelieving and wondering.

We often do not consider the questions we carry to have their own value: we like our questions to be resolved so that we can move on. But in today's Gospel, it is the question concerning Jesus' resurrection that all the disciples struggle with. It is the question that stands at the heart of their terror at Jesus' presence among them; it is the question that feeds their fear, doubt, disbelieving, and wondering. Faith in Christ's resurrection is not something that comes easily, we learn in this and other accounts: even when faith allows us to see clearly God's love, God's will and purposes, a present-day theophany, if you will, we still find ourselves craving more certainty in matters of faith.

The gift for us in this morning's Gospel is that as Christ meticulously visits the disciples after his resurrection that they might have faith, so Christ will come to us in our own struggles. This morning, we return again to our congregation's questions concerning the church's ministry to our members who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered. Will we, as a congregation, consider a non-heterosexual candidate's mobility form the next time we are in a call process? Will Christ Church, Waterloo, be a place where our members who are in a same-gender, long-term, committed relationship turn to receive the church's blessing for their union?

For some of us, the fear and doubt we carry around these questions is no less real than the fear and doubt Jesus' first disciples carried concerning his resurrection. As Christ came to them, so Christ will come to us – in caring conversation; in our reading and in our praying; in our pain and in our love; in story and scripture and song; and in one another. We are Christ for one another: that is the gift of Christian community that escapes people who say that they can be Christian apart from community. For better or for worse, we bear Christ for one another as we embody the gospel.

And so our questions are a gift, because they invite the presence of Christ – especially when we feel as if we're stuck or, as the first disciples were, locked in, in their house in Jerusalem. Such barriers are nothing to Jesus.