

“Be Glad in What I Am Creating”  
C Pentecost 26, Isaiah 65:17-25  
November 13, 2016  
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO  
Rev Rebecca K. Poos

## **I. HERE WE ARE**

“For I am about to create new heavens

and a new earth;

the former things shall not be remembered

or come to mind.

But be glad and rejoice forever

in what I am creating!”

Here we are. November 13, 2016. Five Days After. After one of the most contentious presidential elections in the history of our country. (Though, I have been learning that “the good old days” *before* any of us were born saw some pretty crazy election seasons too!)

Five days after. We’d really hoped we’d take a big sigh of relief on Wednesday morning and get on with life and back to business as usual. Didn’t we? But, the contentiousness of the election has erupted into senseless violence and backlash all over the place—perpetrated by both sides and no sides.

So much for breathing a sigh of relief.....

I do think the populace is so stirred up right now, that this insane aftermath would have happened if either candidate had won. It’s the great “level playing field” of pointless reactivity, and we all suffer.

Emotions are high, reactions are emotional. Neighbors—whether on the street or in the pew—are experiencing different feelings right here and now. We’re experiencing differing

feelings inside ourselves—not just between us and our neighbor.

And no, we’re not schizophrenic! We’re just human. We “come as we are”: tears, fears, warts, righteous indignation, dismay, impatience with the seeming “sore losers”, anger, grief, wondering what’s going to happen, and wondering if we can *ever* all get on the same page again.

And, we come to worship. With our church family, from all over the spectrum. And we wonder what life as a community looks like after Five Days After.

Well, I’ve got SOME good news for you. We probably DO have ONE thing we can agree on, and that’s: We wanna get out of here for an 11:00 Bronco Game!

## **II. UNWRITTEN MESSAGE**

Today’s message is not **finished**.

It wasn’t finished on Wednesday morning or last night or at the crack of dawn today, or even now.

For today’s message is about a “new heaven and a new earth”. About what God is up to—here in this place and space. And we are going to write that message *together*, starting today. Write it on our hearts, together, with one another in dialogue.

For today’s message is about what God is creating, planting, imagining with **delight**—in you, in me, in us together as a congregation. Because we are not ultimately political parties and opinions; camps and categories. Our Kingdom is not of *this* world, but of God’s world. Our “Father’s World” that he’s got every last bit of, in his all-encompassing, holding-us-close, never-let-go-hands.

For we *are* Christ’s Body—Christians in Beloved Community—first and foremost. And it IS a **new** day, and we must decide something *far* more important than the outcome of the

election. We must choose today whom we will serve and love with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength. And how!

The calling of God—to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly *with* our God is a *higher* calling. And calls us to set our sights on a *higher* road, a hope-filled vision, and to respond rather than react.

### **III. CIRCLE OF VOICES**

To start us on the task of writing our story together in this new day, I share some voices of others on the journey of faith.

Rev. Sharon Benton: Bellingham, WA

Dear First Congregational,  
One thing I am sure of: today is no different from yesterday. Yes, our future president is named and our elected legislators will change, but today is the same.

The same divisions remain in our nation, only now we cannot pretend we don't see them. The same -isms remain, only now we cannot hope someone else will fight them.

The Gospel also remains the same today as yesterday. God's commandment is to love-in-action. And to spread the news of that love with all that we *are*.

I believe we *need* each other and our church right now. Our purpose as a church family doesn't change today. We're still called to welcome all—especially those who have been or will be targeted for their perceived difference. We're still called to grow in faith—learn, pray, transform. We're *still* called to live God's love, justice, compassion—for ourselves and all creation.

Wrestling or at peace, in shock or hopeful, come: be the church together.

Sue Greiner, Buena Vista: Some thoughts...

Now that the election is over, we are being asked to unite for the good of the country. But that's really hard to do after we have *demonized* each other. We need to stop pitting "us against them". It shouldn't be about *payback* time and whose turn it is. This isn't a brawl on the playground. We're supposed to be grown-ups.

Remember that those of us who have more liberal views don't have two heads or spit fire. We are your neighbors, your relatives, the people who stand next to you in church, and your friends outside of politics. We're just people; like you.

I don't want to do this horrible election season over in four years, where we hate each other and scream at each other all the time, do you? But we will. It is the only way we seem to know how to express our views.

How do we ever fix this? How do we discuss our opposing views openly without fear of retribution or of losing our friends or being shunned by our relatives? I know I tend to express my views only to a sympathetic audience.

It is very hard to compromise or change our minds if we are not talking or listening to people with other ideas.

I think we need a serious paradigm shift if we are going to survive as the UNITED States of America. There is bound to be a lot we agree on, if we can learn to listen to opposing thoughts on issues that are important to us without demonizing each other. Steep learning curve ahead.

Rev. BEN KONECNY, Greeley First Cong UCC:

I feel compelled as one called into faithful ministry for Jesus Christ to the church and world, to be *more* vocal about my deeply rooted convictions about what Christianity is and isn't, and the witness we are called to share as, first and foremost followers of Jesus, in this time and place.

Please don't stop showing what true Christianity looks like. Friend, millions of Christians stand with you on the side of love, acceptance, compassion, and kindness. There is anger and nastiness that abounds and it is so easy to stay silent and to be intimidated by hateful rhetoric.

Jesus was called a drunken and a glutton because he was friends with the *wrong* people, people plotted against him because love triumphed over legalism in his heart.

He told us the true witness of his followers would be the love they show. "Where's the Love?" It is scary to have the core of who you are attacked, abused, spit upon, and told to be false. I admit that I can feel compelled by such vitriol to retreat in fear. But please continue to stand as a Christian who will be a source of love and hope for so many.

Through the Holy Spirit we will find the source of strength that will hold us together in love. The church *needs* that love, those Christians who deride and berate you and me need you to remain steadfast in your expression of love – even to them.

Do not overcome evil with evil, but overcome evil with good. May the fire of love burn through the hate, animosity, and fear - and spread through our abiding faithfulness to the source of all love and light. As Pope Francis said recently, " When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples they were completely transformed: fear was replaced by courage, closure gave way to proclamation and every doubt was driven away by faith full of love." God willing, may it be so in our day as well.

Steve Quilico: (Teacher at APE—3<sup>rd</sup> Grade)

Today I sat on the carpet in my classroom and had a conversation with my kids about politics. They all had so many good questions, and I listened to as many as I could. I didn't answer any of them, I just listened.

Their little minds were racing with what was happening in our country. At this age, kids are just beginning to really grasp the idea of life outside their little bubble.

I have a saying in my classroom. I stole it from a movie, but it fits my classroom: Ohana. Ohana means family. And family means nobody gets left behind. In our classroom, we are Ohana. We care for each other. We pick each other up when we're down. We encourage rather than beat down. We offer love instead of hate.

After they had time to ask questions, I offered up to them what really matters. Love matters. Your family matters. Your classmates matter. Your school matters. Your community matters. Loving your Ohana matters. The biggest difference any of us can make is to make our community a better place through LOVE.

I reminded them that tomorrow the grownups will have elected a new president. Some of their parents will be mad/sad/happy/glad. I reminded them that while the president does in fact matter, it doesn't matter as much as loving your Ohana well.

My challenge to my friends: tomorrow we will have a new president elect. While this matters, nothing matters more than loving your Ohana. Ohana means family. And family means nobody gets left behind.

#### **IV. A NEW DAY**

It's a new day. We have a new charge, this November 13, 2016. We are called to Be the Church, be the Body of Christ—with all our many and different and quirky parts!—here, in this place. In this time. In this community that is watching and waiting and wondering. Wondering—so what do people who claim to proclaim Good News of great joy to *all the people* have to say *now*? Now that great division seems to be ruling the day? What do these people say, who follow the One who commanded, "That they all may be one."

The moment is upon us. Will we “go loud or go home?” Will our message be completely irrelevant as a congregation, because we can’t agree on what the message is?

Or, will we remember our **Ohana** here? Remember that the ties that bind us—the calling we have been called to, the Christ we commit to as Christians—is what propels us?

New Heavens and a New Earth (Isaiah 65:17-25)

“Pay close attention now:

I’m creating new heavens and a new earth.

All the earlier troubles, chaos, and pain  
are things of the past, to be forgotten.

Look ahead with joy.

Anticipate what I’m creating:

I’ll create Jerusalem as sheer joy,  
create my people as pure delight.

I’ll take joy in Jerusalem,  
take delight in my people:

No more sounds of weeping in the city,  
no cries of anguish;

No more babies dying in the cradle,  
or old people who don’t enjoy a full lifetime;

One-hundredth birthdays will be considered normal—  
anything less will seem like a cheat.

They’ll build houses  
and move in.

They’ll plant fields

and eat what they grow.

No more building a house  
that some outsider takes over,

No more planting fields  
that some enemy confiscates,

For my people will be as long-lived as trees,  
my chosen ones will have satisfaction in their work.

They won’t work and have nothing come of it,  
they won’t have children snatched out from under them.

For they themselves are plantings blessed by God,  
with their children and grandchildren likewise God-  
blessed.

Before they call out, I’ll answer.

Before they’ve finished speaking, I’ll have heard.

Wolf and lamb will graze the same meadow,  
lion and ox eat straw from the same trough,  
but snakes—they’ll get a diet of dirt!

Neither animal nor human will hurt or kill  
anywhere on my Holy Mountain,” says God.

He’s got the whole world  
In His hands.....

That though the wrong seems oft so strong,  
God’s got the whole world. God’s got this.  
God’s got US. Have WE got us? Together for good: together  
for God?

Let’s **be the church!** Now, more than ever. Amen.

## **HALLELUJAH!!** (Offertory)

Leonard Cohen

"This world is full of conflicts and full of things that cannot be reconciled," Cohen has said, "but there are moments when we can transcend the dualistic system and reconcile and embrace the whole mess, and that's what I mean by 'Hallelujah.' That regardless of what the impossibility of the situation is, there is a moment when you open your mouth and you throw open your arms and you embrace the thing and you just say, 'Hallelujah! Blessed is the name.'...

"The only moment that you can live here comfortably in these absolutely irreconcilable conflicts is in this moment when you embrace it all and you say, 'Look, I don't understand a darn thing at all – Hallelujah!' That's the only moment that we live here fully as human beings."