

Pentecost 14 C

Just finished a week of Vacation Bible School and Camp Clef Notes.

More than 50 children participated; they had a great time.

In VBS, reflection on spiritual gifts by thinking with Paul and the call of Moses.

In Clef Notes, the gifts that God has given them and the wonder of music.

It was a lot of fun, lot of work, and many did it well. Donna and Elizabeth.

Now turn attention to preparing for Sunday School, youth ministry, Viva Voce, and adult formation for the fall.

These ministries are some of the harder work we do.

Teachers, curriculum, training events, supplies, efforts to innovate.

Time, money, and effort because we seek to have heirs to our faith.

We do not mean to be the last generations of Christian believers.

Instead to treasure and share the gift of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

ECW EYC DOK Brotherhood of St. Andrew; Mysterious names and acronyms

Hal Carter, priest from Oregon, reported finding all these things to be real in SC.

In his shriveled parish in the NW, they were strange names and initials on the wall.

That tells us that it is not necessarily the case that our ministries pass on their faith.

Sometimes what we do does not do what it is meant to do.

Always keep an eye out for that; when a work does not bear the intended fruit,
should something different be done?

Organizations that flourish in their work remember what their mission is and
seek the best way to achieve it, even if it something never done before.

The mission engenders the means.

Aware that these days are not the best ones for the mainline church.

In many places, energy and numbers have flagged; children and young people are few.

Many churches wonder if there are heirs to their faith and practice;

Will their children have faith? Will their faith have children?

Our father Abraham wanted to know something of the same; he wanted heirs.

Complained heartily to God about not having any; no sons to inherit his name and wealth.

A great failure on his part or Sarah's or, as he suggested here, God's.

God would not let the critique endure; promised him heirs, as many as the swirling stars.

A great promise that Abraham believed, reckoned to him as righteousness.

Yet a promise more believed than understood.

What all did God promise to Abram and what did Abram understand?

I imagine that Abram thought of son and grandsons, great grandsons and more;

Generations to remember him; a dynasty founded on his land, herds, and position.

He thought he would live on through them; achieve significance through them.

He did not imagine being remembered as a spiritual father to so many as claim him:

Jews, Christians, and Muslims all speak of father Abraham and our holy writings all
remember him.

Billions of people now living and who have lived before, across the globe, call him father.

This was not what he might have had in mind; it was greater by far.
God raised up heirs beyond his imagining and in a different mode.

And so for us. We wonder if we will have heirs.

Will the children in the building today be the next generation of Altar Guild, Vestry, and Eucharistic Visitors?

Will they carry on a ministry like the one we have now forward, showing forth the saving life and death of Jesus in the way we do it now?

Or will they be in other churches or no church?

We do what we can to avoid the last possibility, to share a vibrant faith with the next generation.

Church programs can do a lot; faithfulness in worship;

acts of service in Christ's name; and prayer and Bible reading at home.

We should hope to be as intent on that as we are on passing on other things to our children; our wealth and privilege, our love of a certain football team, our politics.

A friend who gazed into his infant's eyes and murmured:

Clemson, Republican, Methodist.

Suggest letting them figure football and politics out, for the stakes are low;
show them Jesus; make their heirs of the great covenant.

Omitting these things makes the transmission of faith less likely

but does not mean that there will be no heirs.

For it is ancient Christian teaching that the will of God will be fulfilled, that someone will be claimed as heir if others forsake their inheritance.

John the Baptist told his critics not to doubt that God could raise up children for Abraham from the very stones if they would not live into their role.

If the church does not raise up a generation of heirs, God will.

If our ministry falls apart, the Gospel will not fall with it.

If we abandon our ministry with the poor, hungry, and lost, God will not abandon them.

God will raise up heirs, workers for the vineyard, agents of the kingdom.

In every generation, some of the most lively Christian voices are those who came from beyond the pale of the covenant and help the church to remember its treasures.

And so Jesus told his listeners to sell what they had and store up treasure in heaven.

Instead of a trust fund, let us give our children a faith fund, and not just ours but any child we can reach.

Faith that the current adult generation of Christian people mean to give them what they need;

Wholeness and opportunity, justice and righteousness in this world;

And faith in Jesus, who opens the way to a world to come, a kingdom to which all may be heirs, as many as the stars of the unfathomable skies.