

Thursday in the Twenty-Second Week after Pentecost: November 5, 2020

Like people today, the Hebrew People in the time of Jesus were keenly aware that they lived between the beginning and the end of time and space. Creator and the Great Spirit created creation, declaring repeatedly on each of the six days in the first creation story in the book of Genesis that what had been created was good. Particularly during times of intense systemic racism and instances of violence as well as of disasters like floods, droughts, fires, and pestilence, the Hebrew People longed for the end of suffering and the beginning of a new creation. Jesus continues to heal on the sabbath day at places of worship and teaches the crowds on his journey towards Jerusalem. Among these crowds, the religious and political leaders are formulating a plan to entrap him and looking for evidence to condemn him.

Read Luke 13: 18-30. What catches my attention in this gospel reading?

Having closed the cottage in Sauble Beach and ending our walks on the shores of Lake Huron, my wife and I brought home a number of green tomatoes. GOOGLE offers a number of recipes for a cucumber and green tomato relish. One recipe was posted by urban gardeners growing vegetables for the sheer joy of connecting with the earth as well as for a way to keep alive the knowledge and skills to grow what we need to eat. A second recipe was identical to the one which came from my wife's extended family, reaching back to her great great grandmother's generation, except that a hot chili pepper was added. Tiny mustard seeds are on the list of ingredients though my wife's great aunt used dried mustard powder. Jesus uses a parable, pointing out what happens when a tiny mustard seed is sewn in the ground. Black mustard seeds grow to become an erect plant standing as high as 2 ½ metres resembling a tree. Wild mustard seeds near the Jordan River can grow as high as over 3 metres. Mustard plants sprout up by themselves, requiring little tending. Jesus uses an example to explain how to live between Creation and the New Creation which will come in the future. In so doing, Jesus challenges the apocalyptic imagination of the crowds to live with integrity. How each person lives and what we do is important not only for ourselves but to point others towards the future. Creator and the Great Spirit are very much present and nourish those with a vision about what will happen at the end of time and space. The winged creatures find places to build their nests, raise their young, and find shade from the heat of the sun in the branches of a mature mustard tree.

I also enjoy making bread so my breadmaker gets used many times throughout the year. During the warmer months, a bakery in Sauble Beach provides a break from this weekly task, except when making gluten-free pizza dough on Friday nights. It is amazing what 1 ¼ teaspoon of yeast does with 3 ½ cups of different kinds of flours and seeds. It was quite a search to find yeast at the beginning of May 2020 on the Bruce Peninsula and in Owen Sound but I managed to find the last jar of bread yeast at a country store in Shallow Lake.

For me, making cucumber and green tomato relish and baking breads becomes a study in the teachings of Jesus and I feel that I experience a small miracle every time. In these days of the pandemic, being a Celebrant at eucharistic celebrations takes on a new form for me.

One of the questions raised by those contemplating what will happen at the end of time and space is the same question that someone in the crowd asked Jesus, **"Lord, will only a few be saved?" Luke 13:23.**

The answer which Jesus provides arises from the two short parables about the tiny mustard seed and the little bit of yeast. Apocalyptic literature like stories told during times of oppression and physical disasters state that only a few will enter into the new Creation. These are identified by the prophets as those who remain faithful to Creator and the Great Spirit during these times of trial. Those in the generation who saw what Jesus did for multitudes of people and listened to his teachings were very much aware that only a remnant will survive the apocalypse. A narrow door to an ordinary home is used by Jesus so that every time someone goes out and comes back through their own door that person can contemplate about what it means to leave a safe place and to return to the warmth and safety of their home. Jesus knows that many people do not have a safe place to live and the warmth of caring people who share this common home so Jesus makes the crowd think about their lives and offers them a vision to make the changes that are needed to be welcomed by Creator and the Great Spirit. Weeping and gnashing of teeth are common consequences expected for those who are shut out and not allowed to enter into the new creation. For the religious and political leaders of that generation, Jesus points out that others who are not blood descendants of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will enter into the new creation, saying **“Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat at the table with Creator and the Great Spirit.” Luke 13:29.** Jesus challenges the common understanding about who will be welcomed into the new creation beyond time and space. Those who watch Jesus and listen to him are challenged to leave to Creator and the Great Spirit the work of identifying who really the ones who will pass through the narrow door to participate in a great feast for eternity.

Reread Luke 13:18-30. What is God saying to us in this gospel reading?

In northwestern Ontario at the beginning of September 2020, there were 9 long-term and 9 short-term water advisories. Since October 19, 2020, Neskantaga First Nation evacuated many of their people to Thunder Bay and left a few on their traditional territories to keep their homes safe and to prepare for the return of their community. The National Indigenous Archbishop Mark MacDonald gathered non-Indigenous Anglicans from a variety of parishes in southern Ontario as Pimatisiwin Nipi to support Pikangikum First Nation to make safe, clean water available to homes in that community. Archbishop Mark MacDonald also support an initiative by Pimatisiwin Nipi to send a letter of support for Neskantaga FN to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as well as Ministers Marc Miller and Carolyn Bennett. Below is a draft of this letter which is being made ready to send to the Prime Minister and Ministers. Pimatisiwin Nipi is a gathering of a small number of the faithful who have invested in making a difference now.

Reread Luke 13:18-30. What is God asking us to be and do?

Please review this letter and email me at davidapfranks@gmail.com if you support Pimatisiwin Nipi in ensuring that Neskantaga FN has safe, clean water available in their homes as well as in their school, health care centre, and band offices.

On the Bruce Peninsula, The Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation (Neyaashiinigmiing) are also under a boil water advisory and await for the construction of their new water treatment plant to begin.

David Franks

The Right Honorable Justin Trudeau
The Right Honorable Marc Miller
The Right Honorable Carolyn Bennett

October 30, 2020

Dear Prime Minister and Ministers:

We write out of our ongoing and urgent concern for the Indigenous People of Neskantaga First Nation and their need for safe, clean water. We applaud your government's plan to eliminate both long-term and short-term water advisories in Indigenous communities from coast to coast to coast. As you are aware, Neskantaga First Nation has been under a boil-water advisory for over 25 years and that further problems exist at the newly constructed water treatment plant. We are also aware that plans need to be developed to ensure that safe, clean water can reach not only the school, health centre, and band office but also to the homes of members of this Indigenous community. Plans are also needed to ensure that the wastewater system also is put in place and works. Most of this community has been evacuated to Thunder Bay while some have remained at Neskantaga FN in order to maintain the homes and service facilities in preparation for the eventual return of the evacuees. At this time of year, members of the community usually hunt to ensure food security over the winter and cut firewood to keep their homes warm during the cold months ahead. Those who have been evacuated need a great deal of support, particularly during these times due to the pandemic. Those who have remained in the community also need supports in order to survive and stay healthy. Safe, clean water and a working wastewater system are essential to the health and well-being of all communities in this nation. Renovations and upgrades in homes may be required to repair problems with inadequate plumbing and mould. We support the development of plans of the federal government in collaboration with Indigenous communities to address these problems. We also support community strengthening efforts by the federal government so that the knowledge and skills needed to build, manage, and maintain a water treatment plant, the distribution system of this safe, clean water into the community, and the wastewater system become available to the people living in these remote areas.

Since 2011, non-Indigenous members of a variety of Anglican Churches in southern Ontario responded to the direction given by former Chief Gord Peters of Pikangikum First Nation in providing support in dealing with the Coroner's Report concerning the number of suicides among youth and young adults in that community. The request for safe, clean water was received by two engineers who collaborated with the Director of Housing, Infrastructure, and Emergency Management from the Assembly of First Nations Irving Leblanc as well as the National Indigenous Bishop for the Anglican Church of Canada Mark MacDonald. The National Indigenous Bishop gathered a working group known as Pimatisiwin Nipi to support Pikangikum First Nation in moving forward towards a more hopeful future for her members, particularly youth and young adults. In Phases 1 and 2, Chief Dean Owen and Council identified 24 homes belonging to the most vulnerable members of the community to be retrofitted with a tank for safe, clean water and another tank for wastewater as well as for some updating of the plumbing in these homes. Five youth were trained in the installation and have used the knowledge and skills gained in this work. Your government matched the \$330,000 raised by donations in order for Chief Dean Owen and

Council to complete Phase 3. The Primates World Relief and Development Fund hold over \$500,000 for further work to bring safe, clean water to Pikangikum. There are more than 450 more homes in Pikangikum that still need safe, clean water and the population of this Indigenous community is growing so new housing initiatives are needed. Fundraising in the coming year with Pimatisiwin Nipi will support Indigenous youth in completing internships in water management through WATER FIRST in Indigenous communities accessible by roads in northern Ontario. However, Pimatisiwin Nipi also seeks to develop collaborative relationships with more Indigenous communities in northwestern Ontario and eastern Manitoba to ensure that safe, clean water is available to homes as well as schools, health centres, and band offices.

In your government's efforts to put an end to both long-term and short-term water advisories among the Indigenous communities, we continue to pray for you as you work with Indigenous Peoples to enjoy what many Canadians take for granted in our own homes.

Yours truly,

Members of Pimatisiwin Nipi

cc. Chief Chris Moonais, Neskantaga First Nation

Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, Nishnawbe Aski Nation

Chief Dean Owen, Pikangikum First Nation

Bishop Lydia Mamakwa, Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh

Archdeacon Deborah Kraft, St. Paul's Anglican Church in Thunder Bay