

Sunday, May 3, 2020
Good Shepherd Sunday

Grace Lutheran Church
Somers Point, NJ 08244

Interim Pastor: Rev. Kevin Hilgendorf

"Whose We Are and Who We Are."

Pastor Lauren invited me to lunch and to talk about the challenges and joys in the ministry of St. David from which I retired 4 yrs. ago. She let me pick the place and I picked *The Dining Car* in NE Philadelphia. Upon my arrival, the place was practically full of hungry customers and lots of conversation. She raised her hand and I eagerly sat down. We ordered and prayed and started chatting. In sharing joys, I burst out laughing. We continued our conversation until a young woman came to our table saying, "You *are* here! Pastor Kevin." She greeted Pastor Lauren and explained she was treating her nephew Ian for lunch when Ian heard my laughter and said, "Pastor Kevin is here." In the midst of all the voices, he recognized *my* voice. She thanked me for my ministry and was grateful to see me again. I did not see Ian nor did he see me.

Jesus said, "The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice."

In *The Word in Season*, Pastor Kari van Wakeren, writes "in today's reading, Jesus said that his sheep know his voice. A note in my study Bible talks about knowing God as a matter of internalizing in our whole selves that God is our God. God loves our whole selves, all of us - mind, body, and soul. God comes to us by abiding with us in the word that we hear proclaimed through others, ... in our community and relationships. The Spirit comes through to tell us whose we are and who we are. Loved by God we learn to discern this working of the Spirit in the world for peace, wholeness and abundant life."

God comes to us by abiding with us *in the word* that we hear proclaimed through others. Humana, my health insurance, sent four ways to help others in this pandemic. I will share one, "pick up the phone and have a conversation." Hearing the voices of your loved ones is just as important as seeing them.

I have a new phone to keep calling members of Grace. I checked the voice mail and to my surprise Tapah called. I returned the call. He was so happy to hear from me and thanked me and St. David for helping them resettle in our country. He is head of a household from Nepal who immigrated here through Lutheran Services. His family faced many challenges, yet with many helpers they adjusted. Now in Ohio, Tapah and his wife are working in a factory. Their daughter is now a nurse and their son is studying to be a nurse also. He thanked me again and said "look for me on face book to keep connected." "Okay, I will," I said.

God comes to us by abiding with us in the word that we hear proclaimed through others. The sheep hear the Shepherd's voice, who calls his own sheep by name. The shepherd goes ahead of them and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.

O God our shepherd, you know your sheep by name and lead us to safety. Guide us by your voice. That we may walk in certainty and security to the joyous feast prepared in your house, through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen

