

Davidson College Presbyterian Church
Davidson, North Carolina
Russ Kerr
“Journey Through Faith”
John 16: 12-15
Journey Sunday
May 22, 2016

So here we are on “Trinity Sunday.” That day we celebrate that odd belief of the trinity—father, son, and Holy Ghost. Or as I’ve heard it explained a few times, hydrogen Sunday; air, water, and ice symbolizing God in three persons. For the music fanatics, C-chord Sunday. That perfect sound that instruments make when they play a “c”, “e”, and “g” simultaneously. And what a rich, but vague, text that John and our lectionary offers us in regards to the work of the Holy Spirit. Here we have the fifth paraclete saying, which in greek is paraklytos, meaning helper or guide! I could not think of a more appropriate theme of guidance for our “Journey Sunday.” And while Jesus’ tone in this story leaves a little something to be desired, ultimately I think he’s reminding his disciples to leave some room for the Holy Spirit. They’re probably like, “yeah, we’re disciples, we’ve got this whole God thing figured out.” And here’s Jesus saying, “wait just a second.” So let’s go back to our helper. Our guide. That illustrious holy spirit, the faith journey each of us are on, and the work of our church. There is a road behind us and a road in front of us.

First, I’m excited about the work of the church! Look around at how many people are here today! How many children are receiving Bibles, how many people are attending summer mission trips, and how many seniors are graduating from high school! Look how many people brought food for our picnic and how many people will be on the lawn (or fellowship hall, dependent upon rain). This church is thriving! It’s hard to subscribe to the narrative that the church is dying when I look around and see where I came from. I have to admit it was not until a few years ago I thought all Presbyterian churches had 1,300+ members. I’m here to tell you I’ve been on the journey, and that is not true! But what’s important is our church has come on a very long journey and has many more years to journey through faith as the church in our modern world.

I took time this week to reflect back on a few highlights from my time growing up at DCPC. So I figured I would share a few moments of my journey. I have an entire wall in my room covered with pictures from high school. The forever friends I have made in the church are from my time as a Montreat Youth Conferee, Montreat Summer Staff, and Massanetta Middle School Conference Enabler. The people in my pictures have grown up to be doctors, lawyers, ordained pastors, artists, social workers, and overall doers of justice. There are pictures of friends who are as passionate about the work of the Presbyterian Church as I am. And for that, I am grateful to God for bringing us together on our respective faith journeys.

So to the 3rd graders, high school graduates, and summer mission workers, I, like Jesus, “have many things to say to you.” I have been in all of your shoes at that exact place in my life. So I also like Jesus, can not tell you all of the parts of my journey through faith because we would be here all day. The beauty of your journey through faith is that it is just that. A journey. Unfortunately, there is no destination for when you have reached “the ultimate faith.” While there are many historical figures and theologians that might argue that point, for here and now, know your journey through faith will always be just that. And I’m sad to say there is no final destination, no faith “goals.” But there is something exciting about

your faith journey. And that is that we are all on a faith journey together with you. Me, Lib, the other staff at this church, your parents, your grandparents, none of us have reached our faith destination. The beauty is that we've got some guiding points and tips that we think might help you along the way. Future college students, my advice to you is learn how to do your own laundry before your arrival. I had to teach my freshman roommate how to do laundry the second week we were at school and while it was a fun bonding experience for me, I could tell he was extremely embarrassed to have to ask.

Finally, wherever the journey is taking you this summer or next year, I encourage you to let the Bible and the Holy Spirit be your compass. Yes, we give Bibles out to 3rd graders for a reason and it's not to be a shelf holder or dust collector! There are some pretty interesting stories outside of the lectionary and what we read in church. I had a mentor last year who we were doing a service project with the church and a kid who was maybe in 6th grade came up to her with great enthusiasm and said, "I'm going to read the whole Bible from start to finish!" With hesitation she answered, "Okay! Well that's exciting. Remember, if you have any questions, I'm here!" So if you do ever pick up your Bible with question, remember that we are here. I'm here. Lib is here. The other Associate Pastors are here. Your college chaplain is there. Your parents, your grandparents, your bible study group, your friends. And even your local or closest Presbyterian (or even not Presbyterian) pastor is near you not to guide, but to walk with you on your journey through faith. And my advice to everyone going on a mission or church related trip this summer, remember the Bible on that packing list is NOT optional! Unless you have a Bible app downloaded on your phone. Then maybe it's optional. So walk in faith together, DCPC. Take it from me, listening for the Holy Spirit in groups is much easier than walking this journey called life alone.

Like Jesus points out, we won't know when the time the Holy Spirit comes but instead we will be guided into truth. Like my professor, Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon says, "when we feel that gentle nudge, that's God calling and the Holy Spirit moving us. Nudging us. Moving us. And guiding us forward." I'll admit that sometimes it's extremely hard to listen to that voice. But in those sacred moments after a long day of mission work, of a long day of keynote and recreation activities in the hot August sun, after a long day of homework and lectures, I encourage you to listen. Listen for that voice inside your head gently nudging you forward towards truth.

Amen.