

Suzanne's October Message

- COVID-19 Pandemic – the journey continues with increasing cases and deaths
- Racial Injustice, riots and increased violence
- An increase in suicides, depression, addictions, homelessness, fear, food insecurity, fake news, loss of jobs, anxiety, frustration, weariness
- The uncertainty of the United Methodist Church
- Lack of respect, lack of kindness
- Natural disasters in our country and around the world
- Upcoming Presidential election
- Divisions in our church and in our country



How are you feeling right at this moment? I have been feeling heavy of heart. Lots of tears have been shed. Numerous questions have been asked. Many prayers have been lifted. Much time has been spent in silence. Listening.

Colossians 3:12-15 (English Standard Version)

“12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.”

We are chosen by God for this new life of love and as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved.

You have been chosen by God! I have been chosen by God! We have been chosen by God.

Isaiah 49:1b *“Before I was born the Lord called me; from my mother's womb he has spoken my name.”*

Psalms 139:16 *“Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”*

The Call of Jeremiah 1:4-5 *“4The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 5 ‘Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart.’”*

Throughout history God has chosen women, men and children.

Chosen: Henri Nouwen says, “From all eternity, long before you were born and became a part of history, you existed in God's heart.”

Never forget that you are chosen. Holy and dearly loved. Chosen for a purpose.

Never forget that you are chosen. Set apart (for God's good works) and dearly loved.

Ephesians 2:10 *“For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

We have been set apart to do good works, to do Kingdom work, to be in ministry together as the Cornerstone District.

How are we to serve together? Looking at the scripture from Colossians:

First, we are to clothe ourselves with **compassion**: The dictionary defines compassion as sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others. Tenderness, empathy, care and concern for others.

The church as community, we as faithful followers of Jesus are to truly feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, visit those in prison and give water to the thirsty. To see beyond ourselves, to understand that being chosen, holy and dearly loved is not about me, it is not about you, it is all about Jesus.

Next, is **kindness**. To demonstrate the qualities of being friendly, generous and considerate. To be tenderhearted and caring. One pastor said that kindness is the grace that infuses the whole person, mellowing all that might be harsh. Those rough edges that we all have. Kindness is an attitude that becomes part of a lifestyle. A lifestyle transformed by the Holy Spirit.

Next is **humility**. This means a modest view of one's own importance. Humbleness in our culture is not viewed as a positive attribute. Humility and humbleness often times are seen as a weakness.

Humility is challenging. As humans we want to be in control. We want to prove to others that we are the best.

May our regions, districts, communities and congregations see and experience the love we have for God because of our servant hearts and in the way we live our lives as faithful followers of Jesus.

Matthew 11:29 *Jesus is "gentle and humble in heart."*

Next is gentleness. The dictionary defines gentleness as the quality of being kind, tender, or mild-mannered.

Ephesians 4:2 reminds us, "*Be completely humble and gentle.*"

Philippians 4:5, "*Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.*"

Gentleness is strength under control.

Next is patience/ forbearance. The dictionary defines the quality of being patient as the bearing of provocation, annoyance, misfortune, or pain, without complaint, loss of temper, irritation, or the like. And an ability or willingness to suppress restlessness or annoyance when confronted with delay.

Patience is helping a small child learn to walk or ride a bike, to learn the Lord's Prayer; to sing the doxology; to learn the rituals of the church by being in worship.

Patience is watching someone grow in faith and use their God-given gifts for ministry.

Next, bear with each other and **forgive one another** if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Forgiveness. We pray "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Are we sincere or are these empty words? Do you, do I, do we hold grudges? Jesus tells us to forgive as he has forgiven you and me.

This is a work in progress for me. How about you?

Next, and over all these virtues **put on love**, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Remember we love because God first loved us. Recall 1 Corinthians 13 "*Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful; or arrogant or rude. Love bears all things.*"

When Jesus was asked "What is the greatest commandment?" he replied, "**Love** the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul and strength. **Love** you neighbor as yourself."

This is the heart of our ministry together. Sharing the love of God found in Jesus Christ and being aligned with, in step with the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, Let the **peace of Christ** rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Matthew 5:9 "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*"

As chosen beloved children of God, we are to be clothed with Compassion, Kindness, Humbleness, Gentleness, Patience, Forgiveness and Love. We are called to Peace and Thankfulness.

In our journey together we will: experience expected as well as unexpected challenges; we will pray together; we will learn together; we will grow in trust with each.

I appreciated what Rev. Sung Ah Choi shared during Annual Conference: In this season of pause, she has witnessed people being flexible, resilient and obedient. Sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading and walking in line with Holy Spirit.

Colossians 3:12-15 (from The Message) "*So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it. Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off & doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness.*"

I believe as the Cornerstone District and the Southern Tier Region and the Upper New York Annual Conference, we can be flexible, resilient and obedient. Sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading and walking in line with Holy Spirit. So, my hope and prayer is that we will be clothed with Compassion, Kindness, Humbleness, Gentleness, Patience, Forgiveness and Love. Letting the peace of Christ rule in our hearts as we cultivate thankfulness where God has placed us to be in ministry together.

Grace, Peace and Love,
Suzanne