

Brookfield Congregational United Church of Christ
Sunday March 6, 2011
The Long Journey Home?

Homesickness

Have you ever been homesick? My "homesick" story is almost embarrassing. I left college to join the Air Force after my recruiter painted a wonderful word picture of life in the Air Force. I would travel to the four corners of the world traveling in jet airplanes and see all the sights. Boot camp in the Air Force would be a cinch and I would have the time of my life. It was all too good to be true! (Did I tell you I was a naive young lad?)

The very first night in Boot Camp was not a cinch at all. After a long day of verbal abuse and endless lines, seventy four of us lay in this huge warehouse type building in our beds (cots actually) wondering what in the world we had gotten ourselves into. Soon, I heard a snuffle. Then another. A couple of unkind remarks were fired off into the air by the first of our squadron wise guys. "You've got to be kidding," I thought to myself, "Some of these guys are really homesick." But, I too lay there wondering what I had done to my life. And how I wished I was back at home where I could go to sleep in my own bed and get up the next morning to do whatever I chose! And this big knot grew in my throat.

What is your homesick story? It can be a terrible feeling, can't it?.

There is a spiritual counterpart to this homesickness. Our souls are homesick -- as it were -- for God and we are never fully at home until we are "connected" with our divine source.

Many (and maybe even most) people don't have a clue. Their "homesickness" is experienced as restless searching for fulfillment. In our very material culture it is the struggle for "more". There is never quite enough fame for those who would be famous, or money for those who would be rich, or power for those who would control the world.

Like it or not, we are all on a journey. The object of this journey, (as St. Augustine suggested) is to find our spiritual home in God as God has reached out to us in Christ. Some are conscious of this inner journey. They reach out for spiritual guidance and join in community as we do.

Some are not conscious of the journey. They are like aimless wanderers who drift about looking for somewhere to go, but see no destination.

I saw a cartoon some time ago which showed what appeared to be a "fortyish" couple in the midst of an argument. The exasperated wife, throwing up her hands asks, "Harry -- just what is it you want?" This stops Harry right in his tracks and he responds, "I want my mommy!" Harry is restless and homesick inside and he's not sure what it's all about. Harry doesn't know it, but he needs to make a long journey home.

The Journey

Unlike Harry, however, we have come together to make this spiritual journey. Look at the top of the orange sheet in your bulletin... Do you see the "purpose statement" – actually more of an identity statement... read it with me... *"We're on a journey, sharing our story."*

So – we are a community of fellow travelers – joined together to discover the spiritual center of our lives. This is the **horizontal** dimension of our life together as a church. But, there is another dimension to our journey that is represented in our scripture readings – namely the vertical dimension. In our scripture, God breaks into the horizontal dimension to give vision and inspiration for the journey.

Moses and Jesus

When Moses (aka Charleton Heston) ascends the mountain to get alone with God – he is leading God's people on a very difficult and long journey. He receives specific instructions and a vision for the people that will inspire their journey. As he comes down from the mountain, it is very clear that the journey will not be an easy one. Nevertheless... whenever the people and their leaders turn to God for vision and inspiration – that is when they turn to the vertical dimension – they receive what they need for the journey.

So also Jesus – taking his closest three followers – ascends the mountain where the disciples will see him for who he really is and they are strengthened for their journey. As soon as they descend the mountain they encounter a world of hurt and need. And here then is the point of ascending the mountain (a metaphor for turning to the vertical dimension – of looking to God)... *“This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased... (and get this) ...**hear him!**”*

And this is where the *“sharing our story”* part of our identity statement comes in. We are on this journey – but the purpose of the journey is to listen for Christ and share the good news that there is indeed a home for our spirits in the arms of a God who loves us into eternity and beyond. We are to share this *good news* in words and in deeds.

Next Steps Vision Team

And all of this brings us to our Next Steps Vision Team. It is time for us as a family of faith to ascend the mountain once again and listen for the voice of God. The team will help us as a congregation to discern where God wants us to go in the near future.

This is not a new theme. We have talked together and worked together to discern where we should be going as a congregation. We have come up with some good ideas in the past. Now we will seek guidance – now we will ascend the mountain and give ourselves to God’s injunction... *“**Hear him...**”*

And as we listen, and hear and gain wisdom on specific goals and objectives... we will find our lives enriched, our faith deepened and our world changed as we *continue our journey, sharing our story!*