

Good Advice

A Message for Sunday Morning Worship
On Father's Day
United Congregational Church of Westerly, UCC
June 17, 2018
Text: Mark 4:35-14

My favorite part of this story from Mark is what Jesus says to the storm which has the disciples scared to death. “Peace! Be still!” he yelled at the storm and the winds. And they did, scaring the disciples even more than the storm had as they wondered, who was this man that even the wind and the sea listened to him. “Peace! Be still!” Great advice from Jesus to all of us, too. But advice not always easy to follow, despite our best intentions, as we learned in our church this past week.

This has been a busy, amazing, stressful and rewarding week for our church. Most of you know about the large memorial service we hosted here on Friday for the Lindquist family and all the hours of work and preparation that went into this event. If you read the Weekly Email Update sent out on Friday afternoon, you know how incredibly happy the Lindquist family was with all of our efforts – what a difference we made in the lives of these family members really hurting from an unthinkable tragedy they have had to endure.

Some of you also know that a group of us spent yesterday at Providence PRIDE making sure our presence as an Open and Affirming Church was known within the LGBTQI community. We

staffed a booth on the main thoroughfare and talked to more people than I can count as we gave away candy and little cards with some basic info on the church. Then, 7 of us marched in the PRIDE Parade, holding the beautiful banner created for us by Christina Brummund. We were in the first contingent of churches in the parade and as we walked the route and folks saw my stole indicating my office as pastor, they roared with approval and enthusiasm. When we reached the reviewing stand, a panel of drag queens who were the judges thanked the churches for being part of Pride, thanked us for reminding everyone God loved them too. I think all of us who marched now understand just why it matters that we are an ONA church. Be sure and ask folks about their experiences. It will be a great conversation I promise.

So, by this point, you have to be wondering what does all this have to do with Father's Day as well as today's celebration of our choir for their music ministry in our midst? And well you should. My answer to you is – everything. Both have everything to do with why we as a church were able to pull off two such extraordinary things in a 48 hours time period. At least to me, the connection is real and obvious. My dad never set foot in the church where I was raised until he walked me down the aisle on the day of my wedding. Some foolish argument he had with some elders in the church over finances resulted in some hurt feelings he could never quite let go of so he just stayed away. But, he made

sure I got there every single Sunday, whether or not my mother was able to attend. Every single Sunday. My dad, in a back-handed way, taught me that God mattered, that church mattered and that I needed to participate fully in order to live in to whatever destiny God had in mind for me. That destiny, my dad taught me, was mine to discover, cherish and make happen. That destiny, he taught me, meant that you always stood up for what you believed, what you knew was right – no matter what. This man, who walked away from church himself because of an argument over church finances, is the one who taught me to be whomever it was God called me to be without counting the cost. He taught me what it is to have courage in the face of challenging moments in life. He taught me that making a difference matters and that doing so was never easy or simple. He taught me that I was precious to God and that God had something important for me to do. So, thinking about all that we as a church have done this past two days, you can understand why my dad has been much on my mind and in my heart – and it has nothing to do with Father’s Day and everything to do with how he raised me.

And what is the connection between Father’s Day and our music ministry? Both are celebrations – celebrations of people who are in our midst almost without being noticed providing a key element of our gathering together as a community of God’s people each week. Even though my dad was not a church-going

man, I am here as your pastor in large part because of what he taught me, the courage he gave me to do things I never thought I could. The only real failure is not to try, was one of the most important pieces of advice he ever gave me.

So, by way of doing something a little different this morning, we are going to spend a little time chatting among ourselves for the next few minutes. I am going to ask you to turn to the people near you and talk with them about your dad or another man who was special to you – and how this man, your dad or someone else like a dad, influenced your life. What did he teach you that has made you who you are? How did he do it? While you are chatting, we're going to be coming around to give you a sticky note and I'll tell you what to do with it in a moment. [pause for conversations] So tell us, what did you hear??

Amazing what a difference some simple lessons can make in our lives, right? Sometimes it's the little things, those fleeting moments, that touch us for a lifetime. This thought brings me back to our choir and music ministry here. Our choir members are folks we know and love who give tirelessly of themselves and their time in order to give you a gift each Sunday – the gift of music. Each Sunday they sing with their hearts wide open, even daring often to sing more complex music they are not at all sure they can do. Dav encourages them to push beyond their comfort zones, and most of the time they do it quite successfully. They

even found the courage to be individually mic-ed as our new sound system requires. Let me tell you, they were more than a little anxious about this – but they did it anyway and they sound great. Way to go, guys!

So, thinking about this wonderful story we read this morning from Mark and the conversations we've had this morning, I'd like you to consider more deeply this week the good advice you've receiving in your lifetime – from your dad, or another man in your life who touched you deeply. Right now, I'd like you to write just his first name on the sticky, and during our hymn of response I'd like you to come forward and stick it someplace on the altar. As you're doing that, I want you to pay attention to your singing recognizing through it the gift God gives us each Sunday our choir shares their love with us through their voices. Then write a thank you note on the second sticky note to our choir and place it on the altar. And before you leave today, please say "thanks" to our choir and to Dav for the gift they give us each week with their presence. I think it's what your Dad would want you to do. My dad would. Happy Father's Day! Thank you, Choir! Amen.