

A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of wooden pews facing a sanctuary with a high, vaulted wooden ceiling and colorful stained glass windows. The text is overlaid on this image.

JANUARY 20, 2021

AGAPE FROM AFAR

Adjusting to life amidst Coronavirus

A WORD FROM PASTOR JILL

As a way to remain connected during this time apart, I will be putting together a weekly newsletter with a reflection based on the upcoming Sunday scripture passage. I hope that by taking a few moments to reflect on the Word of God and pray, we can feel grounded and connected to God and to one another during this uncertain time. *-Pastor Jill*



The scripture for this week is from Mark 1:14-20. In this brief passage, Jesus calls his first disciples, two sets of brothers- Simon and Andrew and James and John. As we look at this passage we can think about what it means that Jesus' first disciples were fishermen. We can also think about what it was like for the disciples to leave behind everything in order to follow Jesus.

Reflect more on this passage on the following pages.



Read the passage:

Mark 1:14-20

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.





Reflect:

1. The disciples left behind their careers and families in order to follow Jesus. Have you ever had to leave anything behind in order to follow your beliefs?
2. Jesus acknowledged the disciples had transferable skills shifting from angling to fishing for people. What skills do you already possess that can help bring about the kingdom of God?
3. God's call is always into an uncertain future. What call, job or relationship might you be called to take up right now?
4. What is this passage calling you to do today? This week?

Pray:

God, we thank you that the first people you called as followers were ordinary fishermen. When we feel inadequate for the task you have set before us, remind us of Simon, Andrew, James and John and their courage.
Amen.



There is a lot going on in our lives and in our community that are anxiety producing. When you are feeling anxious, give one of these grounding exercises a try.

1. 5-4-3-2-1: Empty your mind to slowly focus on your senses identifying 5 things you can see, 4 things you can physically touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.

2. Deep breathing: Close your eyes, place both feet flat on the floor, and practice deep breathing feeling expansion into the bottom of your abdomen. Breathe in through the nose for five counts and out through the mouth for 10 counts and repeat for 1-2 minutes.

3. Word focus: If the deep breathing exercise works for you, you can identify a positive word you want to focus on while inhaling, and a negative word you want to blow out when exhaling. An example might be breathing in peace and exhaling stress.

4. Head to toe: While sitting in a comfortable chair or lying in bed, imagine yourself relaxing from the tips of your toes, up to your ankles, through your knees, and then working your way up, focusing on relaxing each body part, all the way up to the top of your head.

5. Categories: Look around the space you are in and focus on all the items you can find of a certain category, such as a color or material. This can also be done as a mental exercise coming up with a category and slowly recalling as many things as you can that apply.

6. Object focus: Select an object, close your eyes, and focus on how it feels while you hold it/ feel it. This could be something you hold in your hand like a pen or a rock. Alternatively, it could be something like a blanket that is covering you or a chair you're sitting on. Is it cold or warm, smooth or rough, heavy or light, soft or hard, can you describe its different parts?

7. Mental vacation: Imagine a location you find relaxing. If that is the beach, imagine how all your senses would perceive that. Can you see the palms blow in the breeze, feel the warmth of the sun on your skin, hear the waves meeting the shore, smell the sunscreen that was just applied, maybe even taste the salt in the air?

From: <https://www.ahchealthenews.com/2021/01/05/7-ways-to-be-more-grounded/>

What Pastor Jill is continuing to **read:**
So you want to talk about race by Ijeoma Oluo

What Pastor Jill is **listening** to:
Psalms by Sandra McKracken

Please reach out to a staff member if you need financial, emotional or spiritual assistance. As always, we are here to help!

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