

BETTER TOGETHER **“Consecrated and Called”**

We kick off a new sermon series “Better Together.” This month will encourage us to focus on our relationships and our calling to live out our faith in Jesus. This first Sunday falls during Labor Day weekend. While not a “sacred” holiday, I have for years used this weekend to encourage people to rededicate their lives and their work paid and unpaid to the glory of God. Our “work” is one place we live out our love of Jesus. During this time of STILL being in a pandemic, this weekend may look a little different. Normally on this Sunday we do an “anointing” service. This year, with the resurgence of Covid 19 through the Delta variant and our hospitals filled to capacity we will not be anointing people in worship. We WILL still bless and rededicate all our labor to the glory of God and building of God’s reign on earth and celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion. In Christian tradition, sometimes, our work is called vocation which comes from the Latin word *vocare*, which means to call and the work to which an individual is called. Certainly, there are many voices calling each of us to different kinds of work. The struggle for us is to discern the will of God and where our work and energy can point to God. Frederick Buechner once wrote that our call and our vocation is *“The place God calls you to is the place where you deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”* May these words reflect our work and faith this week as we remember we are truly “Better Together.” Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Consecrated and Called”**

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <https://boxcast.tv/channel/f9yfyjzko2esfwfc5vkn>

Prayer for the Week

Loving God, you offer us both work and rest. Today, we lift to you our work: paid and unpaid. We ask Your blessing for the jobs we do each day, whether for an employer, or for our family or for the good of our community. May our tasks call us to the best of who we are and unite with our brothers and sisters as live out our faith in Christ Jesus. Continue to call us as your beloved children into a deeper relationship with you. For we pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen

Monday, September 6, 2021 Romans 2: 1-2

Happy Labor Day! In a way this three-day weekend is the official end of summer, even though the autumn equinox is not for another few weeks. Traditions abound; camping, trips to the lake and barbeques make for a wonderful weekend. Again, this year many of those are more muted and have lower attendance. Even though most restrictions are gone in Kansas, many are still being careful not to spread the coronavirus with the uptick of cases and hospitals full. Offering ourselves as a “living sacrifice” is one way of speaking of how our lives are offered each day through the work we do, whether paid or unpaid. How we discern the “will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect” is reflected in our actions and in our lives. *How does your work, whether a job or volunteer show your faith in Christ? How does your work connect you to God and to others? Does your work create a space where we are “better together?”*

Tuesday, September 7, 2021 Romans 12: 3-8

In this passage Paul describes his understanding of the community faith. All are called and all have gifts to share with each other and the world. For Paul the challenge was not to believe one gift, or one ministry was more important than another. Perhaps Paul's experience as a Pharisee drove this deep need to clarify that "all" were members of Christ and one another. Each gift has its place and is necessary for the functioning of the community of faith. If you look to the list in verses 6-9, each gift and ministry supports and challenges the community of faith. Believers can have more than one gift. These gifts also connect the ministry of faith together as they work together for the betterment of the community of faith and for the transformation of the world. Indeed, they help us be "*better together.*" *Which gifts resonate in your heart and spirit? Which gift is a challenge to you? Today spend some time acknowledging your gifts and ask God to help you discern how you can use them in this continued time of pandemic to make a difference in the world.*

Wednesday, September 8, 2021 Romans 12: 9-12

If we "love what is genuine" it allows us to find contentment at work, at home and in everything we do. If we love one another and show honor to one another it creates a work environment that is beneficial to all. It connects us to God, to one another and can connect us to the world. Our service, our work becomes a witness to our faith in Christ and our work is part of the transformation that God is doing in the world. *How do we "serve the Lord"? With the Delta variant our resources continue to be stretched and our relationships as well. List some ways that you serve God with all that you are and all that you have. Say a prayer of thanks to God for the work you do, paid or unpaid.*

Thursday, September 9, 2021 Romans 12: 13-18

In these verses, Paul is encouraging the church at Rome in their spiritual life and in their work as faithful followers of Christ. Take care of each other and take care of others, outsiders. This balance of "taking care of those at home" and "taking care of those elsewhere" is still a good model for today. In the last few weeks our country has been hit hard by disasters: Hurricane Ida, wildfires in California, another surge of Covid 19 and soon an influx of refugees from Afghanistan. There are many opportunities to help and care for others. The next part though is the hardest: blessing people who are harassing us, considering everyone our equal, not thinking too highly of ourselves and not retaliating against those who have hurt us. In our culture of instantly responding to whatever offends on social media, these are challenging words. And yet, what better way to show how we are connected to God and to the community of faith, than through our choices to live "peacefully with all." *List some ways you live in hope and how your prayer life helps you respond to the needs of others and to live as far as people in peace with all people. How are you responding to the various needs in our community and the greater community?*

Friday, September 10, 2021 Mark 2: 13-17

Jesus offends everyone by his call to Levi to follow him. Again and again, Jesus shows that we are "*better together.*" While the more religious people pointed out the flaws in the sinners gathered around Jesus, Jesus saw human beings worthy of grace and love and mercy. The readings from Romans this week challenge us to "not think of ourselves more highly than we ought but consider who God has created us to be. We are not to be in competition with one another over who is more spiritual or has more sins to forgive! God creates us to be part of a community that lives out our faith in what we say and do. *As you look to your work, how do you offer it to God for the transformation of the world? Do your words and actions glorify God and invite people into a relationship with Christ?*