

A Call to Action: Comfort Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
The Rev. Beth Hennessy

The Prayer of St. Francis, which we have been following the last few weeks, has challenged us to “Understand”, “Love” and now “Comfort”. We are called to comfort others rather than to be comforted. What do we think of when we think of comfort? Comfort food? Being warm and cozy in a comfortable chair on a cold Buffalo night? Is it the comforts of home, where everything is familiar and we have everything we need?

We have lots of ways of describing what it means to have comfort or to be comfortable. But I’m pretty sure that the kind of comfort St. Francis is talking about is something different.

Think of a time when you were going through a difficult period in your life and someone reached out and comforted you. Perhaps it was during an illness, a time of transition or uncertainty or you had suffered a great loss. What show of comfort or concern was it that meant the most to you?

A hand written note? A prayer shawl? A phone call? Or maybe it was someone just being there for you? Taking the time to be present with you. Never underestimate the power of being present. Sometimes, a silent presence can mean more than any spoken word.

When we are called to comfort others it can help to recall a time when we were comforted, think about what we would need in a similar situation.

But, there is another way we receive and give comfort. Worship. Being here, together, can be a powerful source of strength and comfort. Gathering together as a community of God’s people, is a powerful way to share God’s love and compassion.

Now, in our scripture passage this morning, we are called to do nothing out of selfish ambition but in humility regard others as better than ourselves. We are called to look not to our own interests but to the interests of others.

When we live in community, it’s no longer just about us as individuals. It’s about all of us. It’s about serving one another and making decisions that take everyone into account, especially those in most need. When we, as a faith community, are called to serve the larger community we may also be called to put our own needs and interests aside to provide for the needs of others.

Providing comfort can be a challenging task. One of the things I have grown to love about Westminster is that this congregation does not shy away from pushing their own comfort zones to provide care and comfort for others. Westminster has risen to the challenge of sharing its space, time, talent and resources, in so many ways, so that others may have better richer lives. But our work is not done.

In fact, we are just getting started. There will be new challenges ahead. We are living in a time where showing comfort to those who are oppressed and marginalized may call us to stretch and grow in ways we can’t yet comprehend.

But, whatever challenges lay ahead we will be strengthened by the cloud of witnesses who have gone before us, including those we remember today.

We will be strengthened by our faith in God, through Jesus Christ, in whose love they now rest and whose table we share today.

So come to this table to find comfort and peace, come to this table to find strength and empowerment from the one who emptied himself out for the life of the world.

Amen.