

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter 11

*“Open Eyes and Burning Hearts”*

Before the events of this week, Kerry Stahlin, one of our Peer Leaders who is serving as our Assisting Minister this morning, has been working to gather an Interfaith Youth group which will be a gift and a witness to God’s good intent for God’s people...and they are hoping to meet here next Sunday evening.

And the Interfaith Clergy have been working for some months now on an Interfaith Service on 9/11 to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that nightmare. Our Family is giving leadership on that gathering also, that will remember and give thanks for the lost, that will hear the survivors, and that will thank the first responders. Included will be our own Council Member and survivor Desiree Bouchat.

And then this week happened and it brought back a flood of memories of that horrific day almost 10 years ago. I was traveling through the Great Swamp on my way to my doctor’s in Randolph when I heard of the first plane hitting the Tower and I remembered the bomber that had crashed into the Empire State Building in the 40s. But as I got to the doctors, we got word of the second plane and the world changed. Immediately for a fellow patient there in Ken’s Office whose son was in the Tower and who never came home. I headed right back here

and Pastor Walt and I came down and we opened the front door to the Sanctuary, we lit the Christ Candle and then we went and started calling everyone we had a number for in New York. As Doris helped us with the calls, Lyn and Gus Nelson appeared, with Lyn, our counselor, meeting folks as they came in a steady stream to pray...and to wait. And midst our calls out, the call came in from Luann Bailey that Brian was on that first plane that hit the towers and was dead. Pastor and I headed out to be with his family and we spent most of our day making initial funeral plans for Brian's liturgy that would take place just 4 days later on that Saturday...one of the first 9/11 funerals.

And then we came back here and spread the word as much as we could, that we would gather that evening for prayer, for Eucharist, for consolation and for support. And this sanctuary filled that night as it did for the daily services we had for the weeks on end that followed...in the horror of that darkness, it was here that people came for light. And that next Sunday, this Sanctuary was filled to overflowing as it never is the third week in September. Once again, people came looking for life...and they found it...in the breaking of the bread, in the sharing of the cup, and in the Easter promise of God's Word. And as Pastor, Dr. Girvin and I worked with Brian's family that week, they too came for the Word,

for the Sacrament, and for the same promise of Easter hope that Brian and Lu and their three young babies had celebrated in our Jazz Eucharists, just days before.

It is a powerful and simple lesson in our Gospel today. There on the road to Emmaus, the disciples finally see Jesus in his Word, as he teaches, and in the Sacrament, as he shares bread and wine. We too see the Body of Christ in these gifts. In our darkest days; in the midst of hurt and pain; in the midst of despair and doubt; God comes and touches our lives with all of the hope and all of the promise and all of the joy of Easter. And nourished and strengthened, we can then go face that world with all its challenges...and be that servant body of Christ that is so sorely needed. It's a matter of having our eyes opened...and our hearts kindled. Of being touched by the Risen Christ.