

We are people of the story...

Bible... is a book of stories about God and the people of Israel
It tells the good and the bad stories of how the people interacted with God
Sometimes today, people want it to be a "Handbook on Christianity" but it is really just a story

The early church... how a people discovered what it meant to be followers of Jesus
The story is told in Acts and in the letters written to the early church plus other writings
How they figured out what to do by simply doing the next thing
We see both their struggles and their success

Quakers... how people in England began to understand a direct relationship with Jesus
Many stories are told about this people who tried to be faithful as Friends of Jesus
We love to recount their stories as this community of Friends spread to the US and elsewhere
Stories of being faithful to their Leadings even when they were costly choices

Friends Memorial Church... the history of a group of people who began worshipping in a tent
How they were established as a Monthly Meeting and were given a building
111 years of history fast forwards to today as we gather as North Seattle Friends Church

I join the story here in 2000 when I came as pastor... in that time, our story has been significant
Early on we felt puny... but as we Listened, we learned to be a faithful people
God has taught us many things... first of all that God only asks that we are faithful—that's all!
We've learned that we are enough, to start by telling the truth, that we are all ministers of NSFC,
That our trust is sturdy, that Listening takes time but we can hear God as a community...

The story continues today...

Recently we've learned that we don't have to be afraid—Fear Not! Buttons were made
Last Sunday as we gathered in worship, we told powerful stories of how we are living that out
There is huge power in telling the stories—naming the truth of what God is doing
It is important to name it to ourselves
But also, important to name it within the community
Somehow that makes it real and sturdy
We're often afraid if we tell it, the miracle will be unappreciated, so we keep it private
But it is the telling that makes it sturdy within us
I learned that with Kinder Kampus and our community retelling the God story

Last Sunday, we named the God story that is happening among us
It was told with community voices—told by everyone of you
I counted over 20 God stories told last week in worship
Some were little stories—some big deal stories—but all were God stories
Some were unfinished stories—we joined with you in praying for the unfolding story
Truth: We own the "Fear Not!" message and we live it out daily

Our story has moved from "in here" to "out there"—we are the church sent out
Earlier our story was centered in the church with implications for the rest of our lives
Now the story is centered in a much broader location—it's going global

Mark named it in talking about a book on information technology and globalization
How we're moving to a global economy—resources from anywhere are applied
But this is a God truth that we already know
We don't have to be afraid because God uses universal resources to apply to us
Universal resources are applied to our situation in specific ways
It looks different than we expect it to look
Sometimes it looks like we don't have any answers and don't know
We have an infinite God with universal resources that are applied and we can 'Fear Not!'

Next—we are all ministers—and we are all ministers of North Seattle Friends Church
As you go out—you go with the power and authority of a minister of N. Seattle Friends
We accompany you in your going—you are not alone

We are the church out there—all across the city and beyond
I was given a vision of North Seattle Friends in my early days as pastor
A vision of a great people to be gathered and as many gathering places as Starbucks
And gathering places as diverse as Starbucks
I see that vision having come to reality
Our gathering places are all over the place and we named many of them last Sunday
Gathered communities...
Jen, Mark, Beth in buying a condo—expanded to include the seller and broker
Jenny and her friends
Philip and his friends
Burundi—David and THARS and Peace through Pieces
Way of the Spirit—and we joined Becky there with our video
Mark and the SPU School of Business—Fear Not!
Beth and her friends
Sue and the condo group
Dove—a minister at her work with ministry done over the phone
Etc...
We are a gathering of many and there is power in what God is doing among us!
Transforming Power! It has changed all of us and how we do life!
We are living the Kingdom of God

Paul went to Jerusalem...

After a time of greeting and small talk, Paul told the story, detail by detail, of what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. They listened with delight and gave God the glory. They had a story to tell, too... Acts 21:19-20 MSG

John records his vision of heaven come to earth...

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; Revelation 21:1-3 NRSV