

FAITH @ HOME

Week of August 18, 2019

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Hebrews 11:29-12:2

REFLECT: The Old Testament provides us with story upon story of people of God who lived by their faith. They are outstanding witnesses of everyday, imperfect people whose faith had a big impact. We hear about some of these people in Hebrews 11, and learn that while they were praised for their faith, they did not have the whole story. As followers of Jesus, we now have the whole story and know that we have the promise of eternal life at the end of our earthly lives. All of those who lived in faith before us are a “cloud of witnesses” who surround and encourage us in the race of life. It is important for us to recognize those who can help us grow in their faith, both in the Bible and in daily life.

RESPOND: Talk about the people who help you grow in faith. It could be people from the Bible, family members, friends, teachers, pastors, etc. Draw pictures of these people on sticky notes. Use one sticky note for each person. Then, draw a cloud on a piece of paper and hang it somewhere across the house or yard. “Race” back and forth to put the pictures on the cloud. Talk about how these people are a cloud of witnesses that help us learn more about God’s love.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MEREDITH EHLER



Meredith Ann Ehler spends her days juggling life as a mama, wife, and daughter of God in San Antonio, TX. She gained over eight years’ experience with hands-on parish ministry as both a Youth & Children’s Minister before being called to focus on full-time momming for her two children, Camille and Camden. When she is not chasing her own kids or folding laundry, she enjoys helping with her congregation’s children’s ministry, reading, and living her best life. She has a passion for Jesus and sharing his love with children and families in practical, relational ways.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Hebrews 11:29-12:2

REFLECT: Have you ever run in a race? Did you come in first place, or second, or third? Were there a few people or a large crowd watching the race, cheering you and others on? In today's reading from Hebrews we are told to "run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus..." (Hebrews 12:1, NRSV) There is a kind of race called a marathon that is about 26 miles. The average runner can run it in about four to five hours. That's a long distance and a long time! Now, imagine if every day of your life was a race. Imagine running all the time and never stopping.

Thank God we do not have to run all the time. But faith, believing and trusting in God, trying to be more like Jesus, is a lot like a lifelong marathon. Every day we have to wake up and work our muscles of faith to try to get closer to being like Jesus.

The good news is that we are told there is "cloud of witnesses," all the people who came before us who believed and trusted in God. These are people who are cheering us on every moment of our life, and they know we are going to finish the race. They know that everyone of us in the race wins. Everyone makes it to Jesus and to God, and no one is ever in last place.

RESPOND: Talk to your family about your personal "cloud of witnesses." Who in your family has already run and finished their race? Who are the people that are waiting at the end of the finish line cheering you on as you run your race? Ask your family to tell you about people in your "cloud of witnesses" that you never met. If you have a family tree, take a look at it (or consider making one.)

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: PATRICK KANGRGA



Patrick Christopher Kangrga is the Associate for Youth Ministries at Trinity Episcopal Church in Menlo Park, California. Originally from Arkansas, he left home to participate in two years of the Episcopal Service Corps in Maryland and in Massachusetts. After this came the beginning of his lay-professional journey with positions at parish and diocesan levels in New York and New Jersey. He has primarily served youth, with a foray into children's ministry.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Hebrews 11:29-12:2

REFLECT: Last week, we heard about the importance of persevering in our faith, even when we aren't able to see what God has promised us. This week, we are reminded of how strong faith can make someone. We are reminded of prophets who achieved and suffered because of their faith, but nonetheless persevered. These examples of faith become "a cloud of witnesses." They surround us in strength, the same they had before us, so that we are able to go out live into our faith. Learning and understanding those that came before us helps us understand the strength that can be found in our faith. Their history and stories give us examples of some of the extreme ways those before us have held strong in their faith.

RESPOND: There are so many who are part of the "cloud of witnesses." Take some time to look up some of them listed in this passage to learn what makes them such an incredible part of our history and how their faith kept them strong. Can you think of some current examples of witnesses?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MAGGIE PAUL



Maggie Paul is the Assistant Director for Youth and Family Ministry at Christ Episcopal Church in Charlotte, NC where she focuses on Middle School and relational ministry as well as curriculum. She previously served at the Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta, GA where she developed and implemented a comprehensive Confirmation curriculum. She is very excited to bring aspects of this curriculum to her new parish. As an undergraduate with a passion for youth ministry, she served as a summer camp counselor and Episcopal student center "church mouse," and she continues to use her gifts and talents as a singer and musician to nurture her own journey and inspire others on theirs.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Luke 12:49-56

REFLECT: As a teenager, I would occasionally go fishing with my dad. We would wake up early before sunrise, and after making sure that we had packed the appropriate gear and equipment, we would head to the lake. We would arrive shortly after sunrise and get into the boat and begin our fishing. Now this was before either of us had smartphones, so the only weather forecast that we had to go on was what we had looked at the night before – once we were on the boat we were sailing blindly.

But not entirely. Over the many years that Dad had fished on this lake, he had learned the signs of approaching weather. He knew which clouds meant that it would soon be raining too hard to fish and which clouds meant that it would just drizzle for a few minutes. He knew the early winds that signaled that strong winds would be following or if they were going to be temporary. This always helped us to know when to stick it out and keep fishing or when it would be best and safer to go ahead and head back to the dock.

I think Jesus is encouraging us to be like my dad. Well, not to be a fisherman who can read the weather signs, but to be aware of what is going on around us; to look for the signs of what God is doing in our lives and the lives of our neighbors. Just as my dad didn't innately know what the signs of the weather meant, but had to learn them over time, so we too must spend time learning the signs of God's presence and action in our lives.

RESPOND: During your prayer time this week, stop and reflect on where and how you have seen God this week. It may have been in the context of prayer and worship, but it may have been in the kindness of a stranger, a cool breeze on a warm day, or in a way you could have never predicted.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: CLAYTON HARRINGTON



Clayton is the Episcopal Campus Missioner at the University of Georgia. He is also the Rector's Associate for Youth and Young Adult Ministries at Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Athens, Georgia. In these roles, Clayton is passionate about the potential of Christian community, worship, and service to empower youth and young adults to grow into the people that God has made them to be. Before moving to Atlanta in August of 2014, Clayton earned a BA in History and Religion from Campbell University in North Carolina (May 2014). Clayton is a graduate of Candler School of Theology, having earned a Master of Divinity with a Certificate in Episcopal Studies (May 2017). Clayton is a postulant for Holy Orders in the Diocese of Atlanta.

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