

**Sunday, June 7, 2015**  
**Rev. Diane Monti-Catania**

**Sermon – "We all make mistakes"**

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Who is responsible for family?

If you make a mistake, should your brother bail you out?

If a child gets in trouble, should his father come to his aid?

If your spouse does something wrong, is it your fault?

In today's readings we get two compelling stories of family dynamics.

In Genesis we hear of Adam and Eve – the first couple – breaking the rules God has set down for them.

I am always intrigued by this story.

It is the quintessential he said, she said scenario – blame spiraling around circumstances.

God said don't eat the fruit.

The serpent said, eat the fruit.

Eve ate the fruit and gave it to Adam.

Adam ate the fruit.

Everyone did what they were not supposed to do and they got caught.

I'm sure that God was very disappointed.

He punished Adam and Eve and the serpent, but I do believe he forgave them because he allowed them to continue living in creation.

In a lecture earlier this week, my professor pointed out that the Old Testament tells the story of God making several mistakes from which he recovers: the flood – mistake, I promise I'll not do that again; Tower of Babel – mistake, I'll change languages and fix that sameness problem;

In Mark's gospel, Jesus family is concerned that he is perhaps getting himself into trouble, so they seek him out.

His mother and his brothers show up at one of his healing-exorcism gatherings and try to seize him (which is the actual translation of the word) and take him home.

An early model of family intervention.

Jesus is not moved by his family's concern.

While Jesus' family might have been unhappy with his rebuff, we can surmise that they offered forgiveness, because they show up as his companions in later gospel stories.

From time to time, we all make decisions which cause hurt to someone we love.

Our decisions can result in estrangement and alienation in our relationships, including our relationship with God.

God understands that we make mistakes.

God wants to be in strong relationship with us.

In order for our relationship with God to grow and strengthen we must make good relationship decisions.

Our relationship with God grows when we are honest, open, and dedicated to healthy communication.

God invites us to genuine and honest relationship.

It is not easy to admit our human failure or to seek forgiveness from those whom we have alienated or injured.

The good news, however, is that God longs to be in relationship with us.

God offers forgiveness and grace, even when we fall short.

The point is that we all make mistakes –it is part of the human story.

Grace comes when we are given a second chance, an opportunity at transformation.

This is what church and community are all about – learning to acknowledge our own brokenness and developing the ability – the gift really – of offering forgiveness.

We gather to build relationships with others and with God.

The decisions we make about how we live our lives will affect these relationships.

Poor relationship decisions, like dishonesty, deception, and poor communication, alienate us from those whom we love.

These destroy relationships.

In today's scripture lesson, the serpent had been deceitful and conniving.

The result was broken relationships with God and other creatures.

Our relationship in church, our covenant, is built on this very premise.

We just pledged to be in relationship with our new partners.

Each one of us has promised, that to the best of our ability, we will care for one another.

We are laboring together to create a place where people feel welcome – a sense of belonging – a sense of home.

Last week we signed our covenant with United Congregational Church pledging our shared energies as we each journey forward endeavoring to build God’s church.

The Hearts for Hope project that we shared with our Bridgeport neighbors is a great example of something that is tremendously meaningful, but takes little of your time.

The hearts, shipped to us as blank objects, are not just decorated, but then accompanied with a card.

The finished hearts are distributed to people who might need a bit of kindness in their lives – hospital patients, survivors of natural disasters, children who have been traumatized.

I asked Sue to leave the hearts on display one more day in the Parish Hall so that you can see them.

Each one is unique and carried messages of caring such as:

“Have fun, love each other, and try to always be kind;”

“My prayers are that you may smile when you receive this gift and be blessed;”

One person identified themselves as a cancer survivor, car accident survivor and optimist wrote: “try and remember it’s a bump in the road, not your whole life.”

Small acts of kindness bind us to one another.

The hymn that we will sing at communion, Blest Be The Ties that Bind perfectly describes the covenantal relationship that we share with one another.

“Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, Our comfort and our cares; We share each other’s woes, each other’s burdens bear; but we shall still be joined in heart.”

One heart. That is the characteristic trait of Christian community.

We acknowledge that we are the body of Christ and that as part of that body we each have a role.

What part will you play in the future of our church?

I just spent a week studying the nature of the small church.

We are considered a small church in that we have 100 people, or less, in worship most Sundays.

Our time was focused on the identifying and capitalizing on the strengths of the small church.

Our study started with an excerpt from a TS Eliot poem, *Choruses from The Rock*:

*What life have you if you have not life together?*

*There is no life that is not in community,*

*And no community not lived in praise of God.*

Much of my time last week was spent analyzing the work that we do and the way that we do it.

After I get an opportunity to process the materials a bit more, and to review both the reading and writing assignments, I will bring what I have learned back to you.

What I can tell you is that my week of study prompted me to fall in love with this church all over again.

As I read about and discussed all the virtues of small churches, I was warmed by the knowledge that what we do here matters.

Each one of you matter.

Together we are the body of Christ in Salisbury and that feels like very important work.

I leave you with another poem, this one by ee cummings:

*I am a little church (no great cathedral)*

*Far from the splendor and squalor of hurrying cities*

*--I do not worry if briefer days grow briefest,*

*I am not sorry when sun and rain make april*

*My life is the life of the reaper and the sower;*

*My prayers are the prayers of earth's own clumsily striving*

*(finding and losing and laughing and crying) children*

*whose any sadness or joy is my grief or my gladness*

*around me surges a miracle of unceasing*

*birth and glory and death and resurrection:*

*over my sleeping self float flaming symbols  
of hope, and I wake to a perfect patience of mountains  
I am a little church (far from the frantic  
World with its rapture and anguish) at peace with nature  
--I do not worry if longer nights grown longest;  
I am not sorry when silence becomes singing  
Winter by spring, I lift my diminutive spire to  
Merciful Him whose only now is forever:  
Standing erect in the deathless truth of His presence  
(welcoming humbly His light and proudly His darkness)*

My friends, we have much to celebrate this day.

We welcome, with open hearts, our new covenant partners!

We celebrate the covenant we have made together, and extended to our brothers and sisters in Bridgeport.

We pledge ourselves to the mission of this church:

Created by God

Called by Jesus Christ

Guided by the Holy Spirit

Dedicated to loving and serving God and neighbor.

Let us bring our hearts and souls to the communion table as we nourish ourselves to live out God's call for this beloved church.

Amen.