

**Sunday, October 5, 2014**  
**Rev. Diane Monti-Catania**

**Sermon – “The Essentials”**

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What is really important in life?

When an organization is embarking on a planning process, consultants often advise that they develop a mission statement that can be uttered in an elevator.

No more than 7-15 words.

The popular use of Twitter demands that people convey their thoughts in a limited number of characters.

I have this little book that I keep promoting called “Essentials” which is designed to contain everything important about a life – all the things that someone might need to know about you in the event of your death.

I just told the children that our faith could be boiled down to baptism, communion and scripture.

In reality, life is perhaps much simpler than we often characterize it to be.

We develop complex webs of rules and pretenses but it all really boils down to a few basic things.

Love, faith, hope.

What would your mission statement be?

How would you describe what is important to you – really important, in 7-15 words?

When Paul wrote to the people of Corinth he was exhorting this same sentiment.

He encouraged them to cast aside idols – to trust that God would provide what they needed, just as God had done for the biblical ancestors.

“God is faithful and will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.”

Sometimes the way out of a dilemma or a crisis is right in front of us.

Sometimes, our view of solutions are blocked by our idols.

Today’s idols take many different forms.

Rather than a statue of a golden calf – today’s idols might have screens.

Today's idols are anything in your life that takes you away from the things that are genuinely important.

We spend hours of time and a fair amount of money making sure that our physical health is good.

We join gyms, buy exercise equipment, visit all types of doctors, buy natural foods and supplements – all in a quest for health and longevity.

We monitor what we eat.

We weigh ourselves daily.

Many people also spend an equal amount of time and money making sure their financial health is good.

We hire people to manage our investments to ensure that we will have enough money to buy a house, send the kids to college, to retire comfortably.

We know our bank balances by heart.

We check the financial markets daily.

Another one of our current idols is our sense of independence.

Our world has become increasingly divided – compartmentalized – siloed is a new word that I keep hearing.

We live in silos – separate from one another – alone.

While our systems of government are said to be structured for the common good, many people are being left out – or forgotten.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that Jesus called us to a better way of living.

We are to put as much effort into our spiritual lives, as we do to our earthly, material lives.

We must get out of our silos, and look at our neighbors – both close and across the globe.

We must pay daily attention to our spiritual health.

To do this we must prioritize our relationship with God and focus our energy on doing God's work in the world.

While I was working on this sermon earlier in the week, Catherine Chilcoat, a local historian was in looking through files of letters we have from the early church.

I asked her what she was finding.

She said that most of the letters, dated from as early as 1730, chronicle the assignment by the town's selectmen to overseers and caretakers for people who were deemed to be in danger of falling into poverty.

The selectmen would designate a citizen to watch out for the neighbor who needed guidance and support to avoid becoming a burden on the community.

Neighbor-to-neighbor; town-through-church; community building at its best.

Interconnectedness was recognized as the key to survival.

While much of our community caretaking has been delegated to government this neighborly approach continues today within the life of the church.

This past week our deacons carried out much of this same task; visiting people in the community who were sick or homebound, grieving or lonely.

Today, on world communion Sunday, I invite you to consider the ways that you are carrying out God's work on earth.

What are you doing to live out your personal mission statement?

What is important to you?

In his weekly reflection Reverend Kent Siladi, our CTUCC Conference Minister asked:

“What might our life together be like if instead of concentrating on what divides us we began to claim our unity in Christ?

What if instead of living independently we began to recognize instead our interdependence?”

My friends, we are one: one body of Christ brought together to realize God's kingdom on earth.

Let's boldly proclaim this as our mission – to love God with all our hearts, souls and minds and to love our neighbors as ourselves.