

## “Pack It Up: Tunes”

By Rev. Katrina Pekich-Bundy

Psalm 150

Psalm 25.5-10

November 14, 2021

Welcome to our final Sunday of travel. We are talking about what we pack as we prepare for the 2022 year and budget, and for four weeks we have pretended to be on a journey. We remember that our lives are journeys, and that there are plenty of scripture passages that talk about God’s people traveling. The Israelites traveled in the wilderness, John the Baptist traveled to baptize, and Jesus never stayed long in one town. We remember how the early Christians were called “People of the Way” and that almost all of Paul’s ministry took place abroad. Ministry is on the go at all times, yet we gather together each week to fuel ourselves with God’s Word and community so that we are energized to go back out into the world. As Christians we are not called to stay still but to be involved in our communities.

Each week we have packed something different. The first week we packed food, because all good trips have snacks. We recognized the good food ministries this church does in the community, and we remember that again today in our moment for stewardship – forgive me, my sermons haven’t always matched the stewardship moments, but perhaps that helps us to remember all of the different things we have packed. The second week we packed yarn, remembering that we are connected. Our theme that day was travel companions and we reflected on how we care for one another within the church – something you are very good at and it is definitely a gift.

Last week we packed the travel companions that sometimes are parallel to us, and sometimes our paths cross. This included doing ministry with the college and community members. Today, our final Sunday, we are exploring music. Car trips especially need good tunes. Remember that long car trip I told you about from San Antonio to McAllen, Texas? There were eight of us in the van I traveled in and we drove for four hours. It is difficult for eight people to agree on music, so there were definitely times in which some people in the van were unhappy. This is part of community – we cannot please everyone all the time, and we learn to compromise, to communicate, and to work together.

I left music last, because the month of November we are focusing our stewardship fund on music and choir. In the short time I have been here I have seen how important music is to you. Of course, I knew this from when I attended this church in college. I have the fondest memories of the choir and organ and piano and string instruments. As a former viola player, I cannot tell you how much joy it brings me to have strings in worship – it doesn’t happen often in churches. I have heard from you all how much you have missed singing during pandemic – and I completely agree. My hope is that as more people are vaccinated, as we navigate our way to 2022, we will be able to sing more when COVID cases begin to decrease. For now, we rejoice in the musical talents of those who are able to participate in that part of worship.

Psalm 150 reminds us of the different kinds of music we can use to worship God – something you do well. It isn't just piano, or just singing – you all bring your entire musical selves to the service, for which I am grateful. We remember that we use this gift as a way to communicate to God. We can sing a loud song full of Alleluias when we are joyous. We can listen to a somber cello piece when we are grieving. We can dance and ring bells and play tambourine to bring our whole selves to God. As a dancer I have a huge fondness for music. In the Meyers Briggs I am a feeler, which means I feel emotions deeply, and I have always felt music within my being. I tell you this because I imagine many of you do, as well. There is something about music that frees our souls, expresses those emotions we cannot put into words, and connects us as human beings. Even animals can feel music and can be calmed, especially by music that has a steady rhythm much like a heartbeat.

Music is powerful, and it is one of the gifts this congregation brings to this community. Even if you cannot sing, you might be able to sway a bit to the beat. Even if you can't do that, scripture tells us to boldly raise our voices in song, even when we cannot carry a tune in a bucket. The purpose of music in worship isn't to be perfect, but to make a joyful noise. I love hearing the choir, but I also miss hearing those voices that are slightly off key, because it is in those voices I can especially hear the ways in which God has touched our lives, and we are overflowing with such gratitude, we don't care if we're on the beat or in tune.

Today you were invited to bring your ticket, which is your estimate of giving. Even if you didn't bring your ticket, because you forgot or because you're not sure what you can commit in the coming year, you are invited on this journey. You are invited to bring your whole self to take this trip. Maybe you can sing, or play music. Perhaps you have time to give and help with the food pantry or Community Café. Maybe you are good at sending cards to people in the church. Or maybe you are able to connect with people outside these church walls and identify needs within the community. Maybe none of these are your gifts, and you don't yet know what you can bring to the table. Whatever it is, I guarantee God has given you a gift, and we are all called to use our gifts.

I will never forget the story a grandmother once told me. She and her husband had traveled to Europe with her young grandchildren. They decided to go to a historic church and look around. As they entered, her breath was taken away. Along with other tourists, they walked through this large sanctuary, adorned with gold from floor to ceiling. The space was empty with nowhere to sit, making it a wide open space that emphasized the golden pictures and chalices all around. The grandmother quietly stepped through the church with her grandchildren and commented in a whisper, "Isn't it beautiful?" One of her grandchildren said loudly enough to echo off the empty room, "Yea, but with all this gold you'd think someone would buy a pew or two so we could sit."

Where a church spends its money and time and energy tells you where its priorities exist. That church was more focused on being a tourist location than a place where people could come in and gather. A church that spends its budget mostly on mission is going to speak volumes about its community focus. This church focuses on people – those within the church, and those in the community, building up the realm of God and creating congregational vitality.

We have so many gifts and so much to give, whatever road we take, God will be there. Each week we have discussed the twenty-fifth psalm. We have remembered this journey we are on and how we will go different ways. To put our tickets in together means that we are committing to this journey. It means we continue to covenant as a congregation to follow God's good word and invest in this community. It means investing in one another and expressing a theology of love in a world full of brokenness.

I am so glad I'm on this journey with you. I am grateful that our paths have crossed, and lift each of you up in prayer as we enter the unknown of 2022. I'm strengthened by the fact that God has guided us through uncertain times and am hopeful of the future God has in store for us. May we bring our gifts to God, may they be blessed, and may they point to God in all that we do. Amen.