



June 14, 2020

There is SPACE and then there is SPACE

We have all been in a season where the space we occupy has become a part of our daily lives. Space has always been a consideration but now more than ever we seem to be considering space of location in body, mind and spirit. We have become all too aware of what it means to inhabit space. Conversations about our buildings and re-entering church buildings has remained on the minds of us all.

While I am a believer in the notion that physical space of buildings do indeed allow us to gather for worship, faith formation and communal support; I have always understood the church to be the people of God who are to live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the world. In doing that, we are then sent out into the world to share and embody the Gospel.

Recently, I joined a Bonhoeffer Reading Group/Webinar. This type of engagement online has been new to me and I wasn't sure I was going to like it. Perhaps I was more afraid of trying something new. Online learning has not been a part of my experience. I just now started reading books on Kindle. I'm one of those people who like to hold the book in my hands and mark the pages. I even talk back to the text and make notes sometimes in the margins. Anyway...back to reading Bonhoeffer.

The great German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote the following in his book Ethics:

"The space of the church is the place where witness is given to the foundation of all reality in Jesus Christ. The church is the place where it is proclaimed and taken seriously that God has reconciled the world to himself in Christ, that God so loved the world that God gave his Son for it. The space of the church is not there in order to fight with the world for a piece of its territory, but precisely to testify to the world that it is still the world, namely, the world that is loved and reconciled by God. It is not true that the church intends to or must spread its space out over the space of the world.

It desires no more space than it needs to serve the world with its witness to Jesus Christ and to the world's reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ. The church can only defend its own space by fighting, not for space but for the salvation of the world. Otherwise the church becomes a "religious society: that fights in its own interest and thus has ceased to be the church of God in the world. So the first task given to those who belong to the church of God is not to be something for themselves, for example, by creating a religious organization or leading a pious life, but to be witnesses of Jesus Christ to the world. For this the Holy Spirit equips those to whom the Spirit comes. Where that witness has become silent it is a sign of inner decay in the church-community, just as failure to bear fruit is a sign that a tree is dying."

I do look forward to the time when we can come together in physical space and worship God. In the meantime, these words of Bonhoeffer remind me of what is essential in our faith and our call to live out our call to be witnesses in the world, living the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let US be the space where this witness shines forth into the world.

When we return to the space of buildings, may we remember how glorious it is to be a people created by a God whose love is boundless. May returning be done in a most loving and responsible way so that we do not become self-serving but a servant people for Christ.

Blessings and Peace,

Rev. Dr. Susan A. Minasian,

Interim Associate Conference Minister for Search and Call



OFFICIAL CALL to 2020 Special Meeting

Saturday, August 15, 2020

1:00—4:00 pm

@ Zwingli UCC

350 Wile Ave., Souderton, PA

Register at: psecspecmtg.eventbrite.com