

In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

When I was a young teenager I had a crush on the Marlboro Man – do you remember those ads? Handsome, rugged men, often with horses (maybe it was the horses); posed in beautiful settings – the Rocky Mountains, coursing rivers. I plastered my walls with those ads.

That ad campaign worked because it evoked the myth of the American West, the rugged individualist (aren't individualists always rugged?), self-sufficient, able to handle whatever adversity came their way, just man and nature (there were no Marlboro women...).

And it is a myth. America won its independence from England only with the help of the French; the new union was only forged because the Northern and Southern states realized they could not go it alone.

We remain dependent upon our allies in the world; as Individuals we depend on a web of government services – roads, law enforcement, social security, water supply, food safety.

Many Americans like to think of ourselves as the Marlboro Man.

That myth has never been true, and it's not true now.

We live entangled in a web of relationships and alliances and reliances, and we're better when we acknowledge that and celebrate it.

So happy Interdependence Day to you.

Interdependence is where God invites us to be.

We see interdependence woven into the wonder of creation – plants and animals dependent upon one another in symbiotic webs of connection. We rely on pollinators, chiefly bees and butterflies, to spread seeds around. So we need to stop putting the quality of our lawns above our food supply and ensure that bees and butterflies have safe, clean habitats in which to work.

We see interdependence in the church – we are not independent congregations. We are in increasingly reliant upon with each other, and we thrive in the larger community of our Diocese and the worldwide church.

We are interdependent within our congregations too – streaming this worship is entirely dependent upon the good will of those gentlemen in the control booth, and wouldn't have happened without untold hours by Gerald Poe.

We see interdependence in the very nature of God as we proclaim God – not a go-it-alone deity, but one who incorporates community into his very self, Father, Son and Spirit, existing in perfect and active interplay, at work within human life and the created world each in his own way – AND acting through us to accomplish his/her purposes. For we have been brought into this divine community and are interdependent with God. Without God we cannot; without us, God will not.

So central is this principle of interdependence to the life of God, Jesus insisted on it as he trained his followers to be God's agents in the world. When Jesus sent out his disciples on their first mission trip, he also said not to bring luggage, money or a change of clothes. No booking a room ahead – they were to get to a village, tell people about God's kingdom being among them, invite them to make space for God's love in their lives (that's what repentance really is...), heal the sick and cast out evil. If they were accepted, they were to receive the hospitality of whoever invited them to stay. They had to rely on hospitality. If the town rejected them, head out and go somewhere more fruitful.

There is no going it alone in God's mission – we go out in twos or more. That's why we are creating so many teams at the Christ Churches – and most of them are one team for both Christ Churches. Because we need each other, and we need the hospitality of those we would serve. Jesus sends us out with everything we need – each other – with authority over evil and with the Spirit of God. That's what St. Paul discovered too – that when he was at his weakest, that was when he felt the power of God kick in. And God told him, "My grace is sufficient for you." God's grace is sufficient for us too. That's all we need to carry out the mission of God.

And what is the mission of God?

It is to reclaim, restore and renew all of creation to wholeness in Christ. I liken this to finding an abandoned dresser by the side of the road. You think, "That dresser's still good. Just needs some fixing up." So you reclaim it. And then you restore it – strip away paints or varnishes that obscure the natural beauty of its wood; buff it to a shiny glow, protect it with a new coat of varnish, fix the drawers, replace the hardware.

You renew it and repurpose it – bring it back to usefulness.
That’s what God has done for us, and for this whole creation –
reclaimed, restored, renewed and repurposed us. That’s the Good News.
And God is busy doing that all over our lives, all over our communities,
all over our world. Wherever an addict is in recovery, the mission of God is.
Wherever a village is being given access to clean water, the mission of God is.
Wherever a young person is being given hope for a future without violence,
the mission of God is.
Wherever a couple is learning how to love each other more truly and faithfully,
the mission of God is.
Wherever people grieving the loss of loved ones and jobs and churches and
businesses after this pandemic are given hope, the mission of God is.
Wherever people who violently disagree learn to hear each other,
the mission of God is.
We don’t have to look for “what is our mission.” We will find it anywhere we
sense the Spirit at work that gets our juices flowing, and go participate.
Two by two, interdependent, unencumbered by all we believe give us security,
filled with the Spirit – we will do even greater things than he did, Jesus said.

Where do you see God’s mission of reclaiming, restoring, renewing
going on in your life? Where do you want to join in?
Without us, God will not; without God we cannot.
Where do you feel your energy quicken when you see restoration going on?
Of people, towns, communities?

I pray this community will expect more from God in Christ through the
power of the Holy Spirit working among us.
We never have to go it alone – in fact, we cannot.
We rejoice in our weakness and dependence upon God, as Paul came to do.
We celebrate our interdependence, knowing that when God works through us,
we can move mountains. Two by two by two.

Amen.

Mark 6:1-13

Jesus came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

2 Corinthians 12:2-10

I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows— was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.