

“What’s in Your Suitcase?”

Acts 1:8

Pentecost Sunday, June 4, 2017

Covenant Presbyterian Church

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Many of us get to travel over the summer, and we are celebrating the youth who are going on trips with this church, so today is a good day to talk about packing for a trip. First some background.

Jesus had announced this new reality of God—the kingdom, the realm, the commonwealth. A new reality of love, justice, compassion and righteousness. He invited people, ordinary people, to turn away from meaningless living and be part of this new reality. He said come follow me.

But now Jesus was gone. Executed by the political and religious authorities, resurrected for 40 days, and then ascended into heaven.

He had called and trained a group of people, to make this new reality happen. But at the end of his life, they got scared and ran away.

The Bible tells about how they gradually came back together and how Jesus believed in these imperfect people, sending them out to continue what he had begun.

He had previously spoken about God’s Spirit who he said would come to comfort them and to teach them. But in Acts chapter 1, he speaks of the Spirit coming to give them strength.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

He told them they would be “witnesses.” And I believe this is our charge today. Jesus calls those of us who call ourselves Christians to be witnesses, so that our lives reflect this new reality... in our words and deeds, in the way we use our time and money, in how respond to difficult circumstances.

As we open ourselves to God's love, as we hear and believe the good news of the gospel, as we really claim our baptismal identity as beloved children of God, then we really do live in new ways and witness to God's love.

And as witnesses, we are called to go places. Jesus told them you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and all the earth. In the great commission Jesus says "go and make disciples of all nations."

We are sent into the world, as witnesses, to share God's love. So since we're called to go, we need to be ready, which is why I've developed the Pentecost Packing List, with the top ten things you'll need for the journey.

10. Clothes

Number 10 is clothes

We need clothes wherever we go. Hawaiian shirts or colorful boxer shorts or whatever. But we also need the clothes that God wants to give us.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.... Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. –Colossians 3:12,14

Every day, as we get dressed, we can pray for God to clothe us well.

9. Maps

Number 9 is maps

Whether you go old school with a paper map or high tech with your smart phone, maps help us to not get lost and to find our way.

God wants to do the same.

*Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. —
Psalm 25:4*

We need to prayerfully ask God every day to show us the way.

8. Healthy Snacks

Going places we get hungry and we need good food, not junk.

Drink lots of water and eat good things.

The Bible talks about living with the fruit of the Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. --Galatians 5:22-23

We need to open ourselves to the Spirit, and make room in our suitcases and more importantly in our lives for these gifts.

7. Flashlight

Flashlights are very important, especially if you're camping, or travelling in a third world country, or get stuck in a power outage.

We need light.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." --John 8:12

God's light guides us on the journey.

6. Earplugs

Sleep is very important, and sometimes when travelling it's noisy and hard to sleep well.

Earplugs help block out the noise.

Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening. --1 Samuel 3:9

As Christians, we need to block out the noise, no matter where we are. We hear too much about how we

Need more stuff, bigger stuff, better stuff

Should be afraid of everything and everyone

You're not pretty enough, or strong enough or good enough

God has a very different message for us,

About contentment

About hope

About being children of God

When we block out the noise, we can hear the message.

5. Duct tape

Things break and fall apart.

Duct tape helps put the broken pieces back together.

Scripture tells us that:

God heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds. --

Psalm 147:3

In worship and prayer, in fellowship and community

Our broken pieces are put back together.

4. First aid kit

When you travel, it's quite possible someone will get a boo-boo.

If you have a first aid kit, you can help.

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted... to comfort all who mourn. --Isaiah 61:1-2

Jesus came to bring good news to hurting people. We are called to continue what he began and to be instruments of healing and reconciliation and new life.

3. Games, fun stuff

It's always good to bring games with you when you travel, to help you meet new people and to have something to do when you have some down time

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

--Psalm 118:24

As Christians we need be taking the lead the way with laughter and joy and fun. Bring some balloons too; they are fun....

2. A good book (and the Good Book)

Books expand our minds and hearts

Your word is like a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.

--Psalm 119:105a

And we need to keep God's word in our hearts and lives.

1. God

Sometimes we pray "Dear God please be with us." But God has already promised to be with us.

After his death and resurrection, according to Matthew's gospel, Jesus spoke these words to his disciples:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. --

Matthew 28:19-20

Wherever you go on your journeys, to Guatemala or a family picnic or the doctor's office or a youth adventure trip, please remember that God is with you, to guide, comfort, challenge, and lead you.
Amen.