

## Listening and Talking . . . by Rev. Tom Cici

As followers of Jesus, we are to do our best to follow Jesus' ways. Jesus' entire life was about honoring God, praying to God, serving others in the name of God, and submitting to God's will. So, I ask all of you, as I also ask myself, what does putting God first mean to you? Is it praying more? Is it spending more time giving gratitude to God? Is it sharing the good news about Jesus? Is it inviting others into your life, your community, your church in the name of love? Is it serving others in the name of Christ? Is it giving more of our time and money to those in need and to the church?

I think it's all of those realities. Both God's truest identity and our own True Self are Love. We are to do love because we are love, we are made of God's love, we live in God's love and we are always moving toward love. This sounds so simple that most people don't see or hear it.



As James Finley says, “The greatest teacher of God's presence in our life *is our life.*” We are to be the image of God; we are to live out our Real life – the practice of the presence of God – doing God's Love. When Jesus appointed 70 disciples to pair up and go into every town and place, he told them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you” (Luke 10:9). I think this means that the kingdom of God is here and not yet at the same time. The kingdom of God is now for those who *bear the mystery of God's suffering and God's joy inside themselves.* But the kingdom of God is not yet for those who are self-centered, unwilling to surrender to God's will, unwilling to carry the cross of Christ, and unwilling to accept the inner peace of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' most common name for himself is “the Son of Man.” He uses the term dozens of times in the four Gospels. Jesus' reality, his cross, is to say a free “yes” to what humanity daily asks of him. In our Visioning group discussions, we are constantly looking at our experiences. Why? *We do not find God's vision; it finds us. We don't think ourselves into new ways of living. We live ourselves into new ways of thinking.* As Christians, *we are to do the journey of Jesus Christ;* we are to continue Jesus' journey. This is different than simply worshipping Jesus' journey. We are to take up the cross of Christ – that is, to freely say “yes” to what humanity is daily asking of us, and to feel the inner joy of God's Spirit. In doing so, people in our community will see Christ amongst us, want to follow, and join us because they like what we are doing.

Blessings as we serve together in the Resurrection of Christ.