

The Rev. Dr. Mary Barber

5.17.26 - Easter 7

This week I heard a heartwarming story amid all the ongoing bad news, about a project to revive coral reefs around Jamaica. The warming planet and an especially bad heat wave three years ago did a lot of damage, bleaching the coral and turning once vibrant reefs eerily silent and ghostly.

The project has brought together diverse partners. An Italian artist has created coral-shaped speakers, playing the sounds of an active reef underwater, to attract life back. His sound sculptures first showed promising results in the Great Barrier Reef off Australia -- the fish population doubled in just six weeks.

Jamaican scientists are growing coral fragments in the lab to implant below. A scuba instructor known as Lady G'Diver is directing the dives and assisting with the installations of speakers and baby coral.

These are unusual methods. But as the diver known as Lady G'Diver says, I'm at the point where let's try everything.

It will be interesting to see what happens with this Jamaica-Italian experiment that has brought together creative people from science and the arts. Truly these folks are working to build God's kingdom under the sea.

This morning we are doing our own part to bring people together, to keep inviting people into the project of building God's kingdom. Through baptism, we will welcome three members of one family -- Stuart, Rowan, and Rorie -- into the community of Christians, and into this St Martin's community. Stuart, Rowan, Rorie, and their sponsors will soon take vows to follow Jesus. We will renew our vows with them. Now, to follow Jesus, you need to know where to look for Jesus. In today's reading from Acts, we get a clue about that from some angels. The resurrected Jesus ascends into heaven, and the disciples stare up into the sky where they saw him disappear.

This seems like a natural thing to do, to keep checking where they saw him last. But the men in white robes challenge the disciples. Why do you stand looking up to heaven?, they ask.

It's a similar question two men in white robes ask the women, when they stare into the empty tomb.

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but risen.

Stuart, Rowan, and Rorie today are being baptized in the name of the one who was crucified, who rose, who ascended, but who is not on the cross, in the tomb, or in the air. We are baptized to follow the living God in Christ.

And so where do we look for Jesus? We get another clue from our baptism vows. We vow to seek and serve Christ in all persons. In all persons. We are told in our vows that we will find Jesus, the living God in Christ, in each other.

Our vows tell us how to find Jesus in each other, by breaking bread and praying together, by loving our neighbor, by finding others and telling them the good news, by working together for justice and peace.

We are affirmed in baptism as what we already are, beloved children of God. We are joined together in baptism as something we already are, members of the one Body.

And so we look for Jesus in every living person, in the friends who call and visit when we are sick or grieving, in the stranger who needs our help, in the people who are vulnerable and hurting, and in the helpers.

When we look we will find. This week some of us from St Martin's saw Jesus in the faces of students and teachers at the Need-in-Deed Shout Out. We saw Jesus in the class who raised \$4000 to support immigrants. We saw Jesus in the class who reached out to their lunch lady, even though they thought she was mean, and after hearing her story became her biggest advocate. We saw Jesus in young Miles, who quoted Sam Cooke at the mic, saying Change is gonna come.

St Martin's, Jesus can bring together an Italian artist and a Jamaican diving instructor, a third grader and a stern cafeteria worker. Jesus will not stop until "they may be one" as he says in today's Gospel.

St Martin's, when we see Jesus, when we live into our identity as members of the Body of Christ, we can make change in the big and daunting problems of our world.

St Martin's, let us renew our vows and be strengthened in our work. Let us go from this place and look for Jesus in the people who are building God's kingdom. Let us look, and let us join in the work. Amen.