

## “We Got This”

Rev. Bill Eichhorn

October 30, 2022



*Thumbs Up*  
Carol Aust

### Readings

From *Consolations*  
by David Whyte

Vulnerability is not a weakness, a passing indisposition, or something we can arrange to do without, vulnerability is ... the underlying, ever present and abiding undercurrent of our natural state .... The only choice we have as we mature is how we inhabit our vulnerability, how we become larger and more courageous and more compassionate ... our choice is to inhabit vulnerability as generous citizens of loss, robustly and fully, or conversely ... never wanting to risk ourselves, never walking fully through the door.

Jeremiah 29:11

For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

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Back in August, I filled in one Sunday for David while he and Tripp were away. I was about to begin the 8:30 Service, when I became aware that the liturgist hadn't arrived. Ann was aware of the same, so she walked up to the hearth, picked up a candle and whispered, "Should I put this on the altar table?" Before I could answer, Marilyn Ryan said "Elizabeth is coming with flowers. We got this. Someone brings flowers and is liturgist for each Sunday." Ann put the candle back, and a few moments later, Elizabeth arrived with flowers. No doubt about it, the 8:30 folks got it covered.

Marilyn's words "We got this" bring back a memory from last summer. For the past ten years, every summer we drive a thousand miles in our RV to a beautiful Washington state campground, Rasar State Park, to serve as volunteer campground hosts. Located forty miles south of the Canadian border and forty miles east of Anacortes on Scenic Route 20, the park borders the Skagit River and sits at the foot of the Northern Cascades, known as the American Alps. Spectacular! One of our duties is to sell firewood to the campers from the shed beside our campsite. There's a doorbell on the shed, so when campers want to buy firewood, they ring the bell and one of us goes out to make the sale. Often, the bell rings while we are having dinner, as it did one evening. I went out to make the sale and was met by a twelve-year-old girl on her bike. "I'd like to buy some firewood," she said. The rest of the story I put into a poem.

“What Pacific Northwest Girls Are Made Of”

Bill Eichhorn

She rode up to the woodshed  
on her purple bike - twelve-year old  
killer smile. “May I have three bundles  
of firewood?” as she handed me several bills.  
Would you like me to deliver them  
to your camp site? They’re heavy.  
“No thanks,” she replied. “I can  
carry them on my bike.”  
I slid the cloth straps on each bundle  
over each handlebar. “Just put  
the third bundle on the ground and  
I’ll be back for it.”  
As she got underway, the bike wobbled,  
but she quickly found her balance and  
peddled off, her purple hair flowing  
from her helmet, glinting in the sun.  
On her return, we loaded the third bundle  
on her handlebar and after getting a feel  
for the unbalanced load, she said, “I got this,”  
and rode off with a smile beaming with pride.

As we head into this pastoral transition time, I sense that the “We got this” feeling is alive and well among us. Like the girl in the poem, we will know a few wobbles as we start off, but like her, we will get the feel of the load and be on our way. We will experience some imbalance, but as our Covenant declares, we will not fear the unfolding of imbalance, which means we need to keep our sense of humor and maintain an attitude of humility.

So how do I know we’ve got this? Well, first of all, we are blessed with authentic community here at CCC. We know, as our Covenant states, “That faith and hope and love are the inhaling and exhaling of life.” We practice breathing in and breathing out faith, hope, and most importantly, love. When we come together and are invited to “breathe,” part of the air we breathe is love, the air of caring for one another. So let’s take a deep breath. Another. My friends, we are breathing in the love God’s Spirit has grown through us, among us. This love, flowing through us like an ever-flowing stream, will nourish and refresh us during the uncertainty of change. Community is one of the hallmarks of CCC. It is, I believe, our greatest strength.

A second reason I believe we’ve got this is our tradition and practice of celebratory worship. I don’t have to go back any further than last week’s 10 o’clock service when we were lost in joy and amazement as Gabby Winnett sang “Bridge Over Troubled Waters,” which was such a powerful witness to how we intend to be there for each other when times are hard. It was an experience demonstrating how celebratory worship can inspire and nourish our capacity for empathy and compassion. One of the joys of coming back to the building is being able to sing our beloved songs and chants together. Scott will continue to provide music that stirs our hearts. In our 8:30 service, this inspiration often comes through the deep sharing in response to the message.

A third reason I believe we've got this is because of our contemplative orientation. John Philip Newell, in his book *The Rebirthing of God* writes of Thomas Merton's understanding of the contemplative way.

We are living in a world that is absolutely transparent, and God is shining through it all the time ... in people, in things, in nature and in events. But the problem is we don't see it.

Newell goes on to say:

Spiritual practice is about remembering to see. It is about intentional disciplines, individually and collectively, that will enable us to be more aware of the shining of the Divine Presence that is within us and all around us ... It is about training our inner vision to remain alert to the glory that is at the heart of every moment.

Spiritual practice is about remembering to see.

Our three online weekly offerings—Wednesday Communion, Thursday Stone Soup and Friday Contemplative Practice—have helped us remember to see God shining through all, even during the isolation of the pandemic, and we will continue those vital practices. Monthly Taize services, as well as labyrinth walks, help us remember to see. Our Sunday worship services will continue to be shaped by this contemplative orientation. One of the reasons so many of us are drawn to Mary Oliver is the contemplative orientation of her poetry. She helps us remember to see the divine shining through all of life.

"The Ponds"

from *House of Light*

Still, what I want in my life  
is to be willing  
to be dazzled—  
to cast aside the weight of facts

and maybe even  
to float a little  
above this difficult world.

I want to believe I am looking

into the white fire of a great mystery.

I want to believe that the imperfections are nothing—  
that the light is everything—that it is more than the sum  
of each flawed blossom rising and falling. And I do.

The next time someone asks you what "CCC" stands for, you know what to answer, right? "CCC" stands for Community, Contemplation and Celebratory Worship. Dave Long recently reminded me that our interim minister before David Gregory, Rev. Irene Lauderman, in her final report to the Board, identified these as our three most important strengths. I believe all three are stronger today than they were in 2017 when David became our minister. I chose David Whyte's teaching on vulnerability for our reading today because I believe he helps us see why our three strengths—Community, Contemplation and Celebratory Worship—are so important.

The only choice we have as we mature is how we inhabit our vulnerability ... our choice is to inhabit vulnerability as generous citizens of loss ... or conversely never wanting to risk ourselves, never walking fulling through the door.

Dear friends, we are citizens of loss, as we acknowledged earlier in our service; however, we choose to make ourselves vulnerable to both the suffering from loss, as well as to the wonder of love, of being held tenderly by a community committed to “supporting the fragile, protecting the wounded.” Through community we learn to trust opening our hearts each and every day. Celebratory worship inspires us to be what Henri Nouwen called “wounded healers,” people reaching out courageously with compassion to one another and to a hurting world. Our contemplative practices train us to live with a balance between being and doing, between inner awareness and outward engagement.

We got this, my friends. How do I know? I know because of the act of compassion I witnessed last Sunday after our 10am service. As I said earlier, Gabby Winnet moved us to tears with her gorgeous voice, her presence. Those tears flowed and we were moved to a standing ovation, because Gabby helped us see and feel the flow of Divine Grace right here in this room and in the Zoom room. After the service, Scott DeTurk handed her an envelope containing her honorarium. She handed it back to him and told Scott she wanted it to go to help with the medical expenses for the family Ann mentioned in her message whose baby daughter will have open heart surgery. Not a doubt in my mind. The Spirit has generated a wave full of hope that is rolling toward us. We got this.

