

IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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The Reverend Courtney Veazey  
Sunday, May 4, 2025

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Speak to us, living God,  
as you have spoken to our ancestors:  
through the voices of your prophets,  
the breath of your Spirit,  
and the life of your Son,  
so that we may live according to your word;  
through Jesus Christ our Savior.  
Amen.

‘After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.” He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he had taken it off, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them, and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him

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the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.” (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

Holy wisdom, holy word.

**Thanks be to God.**

They arrive at the shoreline – the water’s edge – and memories bubble up within their bodies.

Memories of climbing the mountain that overlooks the sea – of sitting down upon grass and feeding five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. Memories of rowing a boat through strong wind and fearfully watching Jesus walk on the sea.

This landscape – this place that they have previously encountered – holds them as it also activates their bodies’ nervous systems.

The sea’s waves – in rhythm with the moon’s gravitational pull – steadily wash upon their feet.

The disciples collectively take a deep breath, look upon the waters before them, and Peter says, “I’m going fishing.”

Prior to this arrival at the Sea of Tiberias, the resurrected Jesus has stood among the disciples, breathed the Holy Spirit upon them, shown them his wounded hands and side, and said, “Peace be with you.”

The one whom Mary Magdalene assumed to be the gardener in her encounter with the resurrected rabbi has revealed himself to the disciples twice so far.

Jesus has made known the Holy Spirit’s presence and has shown marks specific to his person.

Jesus has grounded these revelations in peace.

And yet peace remains elusive.

There is a definition of trauma that comes from a body-oriented therapeutic model called Somatic Experiencing, and it is a definition that I have come to deeply appreciate.

Trauma is “anything that is too much, too soon, or too fast for our nervous system to handle.”<sup>[1]</sup>

This modern definition leads me to approach our ancient Gospel from a different lens.

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The disciples have experienced too much, too soon, too fast.

Jesus is betrayed, arrested, and bound. Jesus is denied. Jesus is flogged and crucified. Jesus is dead and buried. The tomb's stone is removed. Jesus is calling Mary by name. Jesus is coming through locked doors and standing among them – showing hands and side and offering peace.

Too much, too soon, too fast.

The disciples arrive at the shoreline – the water's edge. The too-much, too-soon, too-fast memories overwhelm their bodies – and they go fishing.

This fishing could be seen as mindless comfort, but I imagine it is something more.

Perhaps it is a way to engage the night – to release all that their bodies hold – to begin integrating memories for which words fail.

A way of creating space, so they can hear Jesus' voice calling to them through the overwhelm.

“Children, you have no fish, have you?”

A voice of truth rises with the daybreak, night cracks, bodies settle, and soothed souls become willing to try something new.

“Cast the net to the right side,” the voice says.

The disciples take the risk, cast the net, and catch 153 fish.

Night cracks, and they know the voice belongs to the Lord.

Peter throws himself into the sea like a cast fishing net, and the other disciples row the boat one hundred yards to the beach.

Night cracks, embers glow, wood crackles, smoke rises as fish sears and bread bakes.

The disciples arrive at the shoreline – the water's edge – and Jesus feeds them breakfast. The resurrected Jesus takes bread and gives it to them and does the same with the fish.

Breakfast served over a charcoal fire – another landscape that causes recollections to reverberate through Peter's body.

Another landscape full of memories that need to be integrated and healed.

A courtyard. A cold night. A question. A charcoal fire. A denial followed by two more. A cock crowing.

Night cracks as Jesus feeds us and tends us in the confrontation of our deepest places of shame.

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Night cracks as Jesus asks us questions that pull us back to our center as the body of Christ.

Do you love me more than these? Do you love me? Do you love me?

Questions that both hurt us and heal us.

Questions that point us to who we are and what we are called to do.

Feed. Tend. Feed.

Shepherd Jesus' lambs and sheep.

Stretch out your hands, let the Holy Spirit fasten a belt around you and take you where do not wish to go.

Today, we arrive at the shoreline – the water's edge – and the too-much, too-soon, too-fast of the world overwhelms our bodies.

It is time for us to take a deep breath, look upon the waters before us, and go fishing.

It is time for us to find the sacred movements that release our bodies from trauma, so we can be freed to hear Jesus's voice calling to us again.

It is time for us to throw ourselves into our baptismal waters, swim to Jesus, and receive a meal that nourishes us.

It is time for us to face questions that hurt us and heal us.

It is time for us to stretch out our hands.

It is time for us to follow.

It is time for us to meet our resurrected Shepherd by the sea, so we may become shepherds.

Shepherds whose bodies carry memories, whose bodies witness daybreak cracking open the night, whose bodies hear the voice of truth, whose bodies feel the shock of cold water and receive the warmth of bread and fish. Shepherds whose bodies love, love, love Jesus and feed and tend God's lambs and sheep. Shepherds whose bodies follow the Holy Spirit's fastening upon our lives.

May it be so. Amen.

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[1]

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-intelligent-divorce/201503/somatic-experiencing>