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May

## The Story Abides

Stories That Matter

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, YEAR A

The Spirit abides in us, preserving and weaving our shared story as the body of Christ. Worship this week celebrates testimony, memory, and the ongoing narrative of God's love in our community.

### REFERENCES

Ezekiel 34:1-7

Psalms 115:1-11, 18b

1 Peter 3:13-22

John 14:15-21

### COLORS

White

What is our story? I think it's a good question to ask from time to time. We tell ourselves all kinds of stories about our lives, our church, our workplaces, our community. Stories help us make sense of our experiences, even when some of them may not be the most helpful and/or leave out details. That's the way our brains work. We are limited in what each of us alone can remember and interpret about our experiences. So, in the church—and significantly, in worship—we have to pay attention to our individual stories and how we bring those stories together to tell our shared story of life in the body of Christ.

In this week's reading from John 14, Jesus reminds us that the Spirit abides in us. To give it a bit of a literary/library spin, the Spirit is our archivist. The Spirit lives in us, guides us, and gathers us together, preserving us as the living story of the body of Christ. So, how do we tell that story in worship? In one sense, every time we gather for worship, we tell our story. Every time we read

scripture or sing the songs of the faith, we tell our story. But what is the story of your community? Of your local church? Of your experience as the church in your particular context?

As you plan worship, draw on the heart songs of your congregation. Sing the words and the tunes that have accompanied your people through the ups and downs of the last several years or even decades. Lean into the music that tells your story. Find people who can witness to your church's story right now. Include a time for testimony or ministry moments where one or two members share how they've experienced Resurrection life within your congregation. Show pictures from the last year in the life of the church. Pray for the present needs and concerns as your church seeks to share love and make disciples in your particular corner of the world. As you reflect on the past and the present, pray and bless one another to continue the story into the future. Remember: the Spirit abides in us, weaving a living, breathing narrative of God's love that unfolds in and through each of us as we live together in the body of Christ.

*Dr. Lisa Hancock, Director of Worship Arts Ministries, served as an organist and music minister in United Methodist congregations in the legacy Northwest Texas and North Texas Annual Conferences. After receiving her Master of Sacred Music and Master of Theological Studies from Perkins School of Theology, she earned her PhD in Religious Studies from Southern Methodist University, where she researched and wrote on the doctrine of Christ, disability, and atonement. Lisa is also the co-lead of Growing in Grace: Accessible Worship for All God's Children.*

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