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Before I left for the General Assembly last week, our secretary asked me, “What’s your sermon title for the week when you return?”

“I Have No Idea,” I said.

She replied, “It would be helpful if you gave me the sermon title and your scripture before you leave so I can have the bulletin ready for you to review when you return.”

“I know that,” I stated.

“So, what’s your title?” she asked.

“I Have No Idea,” I explained.

“I already know that, but when will you have your title ready for me?”

“I just told you: I Have No Idea.”

“Well, if you don’t have it to me before you leave for the Assembly, what should I put down for the title?”

“I just gave the title to you; it’s I Have No Idea.”

“OK. I’ll just put in the bulletin for the title that you have no idea what the title will be.”

“Yes, that’s right. I Have No Idea,” I exclaimed.

“Never mind, I’ll just leave it blank.”

By this point I wasn’t sure what else to say, so I asked, “What’s wrong with the title I gave you?”

Our secretary replied, “I have no idea.”

Have you ever felt that way—that you have no idea what do say? When I looked at the suggestions in the Narrative Lectionary for the next several weeks, I muttered to myself: I have no idea what I might say about the Book of Hebrews for four weeks. One writer called this book an enigmatic book¹, meaning mysterious, unknowable. *Oh great, I thought, four weeks of exploring a book that’s unknowable! What will we do together each Sunday? Sit in silence and ponder the mysteriousness of the words?* I might get by with that for one week, but I imagine we would all get a bit restless by the end of four weeks.

Hebrews doesn’t seem to fit the pattern of much of the rest of the New Testament: it’s not one of Paul’s letters to a church, nor was it written by one of the other apostles of Jesus, such as James, Peter, John, or Jude. It seems to be a writing without an author, or as the reformer Martin Luther stated

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1500 years later, Hebrews is a book in search of an author.

Some readers have even noted the harsh words written against the Jews in this book, warning us to be careful to not use it as an anti-Semitic weapon to bolster our own faith while condemning the faithful Jewish community.

What will we do with the Book of Hebrews the next four weeks? I have no idea where it will take us, but let's start at the beginning and see where we go.

From the beginning we notice it doesn't contain an author's name, nor does it address a group of people. It doesn't have the feel of a letter, and some scholars have suggested it's more like a sermon than a letter. The Book of Hebrews begins by diving time into two periods: the past when God spoke to prophets, and the final days when God spoke through a Son. We often think of time in three periods: the past, such as what happened this morning; the present, what's happening right now, such as wondering when the sermon will be over; and the future, such as when we get to go and eat lunch. But how many of us think of the time period of the final

days? Most of us would rather avoid that time period, but sometimes we're reminded of that possibility when we watch a History channel special that explains the top ten ways the world could end.²

- Ocean currents stop and cause weather disasters.
- Aliens invade our planet.
- The Earth gets pulled out of orbit, causing a global environmental crisis
- A mega eruption from a volcano occurs, with the ash blocking sunlight.
- Cosmic radiation of a gamma ray wipes out most life.
- We destroy ourselves with a nuclear war.
- A solar storm knocks out all the power on Earth.
- A runaway rogue planet or an asteroid or a black hole encounters the Earth.

Most of us hope none of these events will occur in our lifetimes, but the writer of Hebrews believed they were living in the actual last days, that Jesus would return any moment. But rather than seeing this as time of anxiety, the writer referred to an ancient writing, the Wisdom of Solomon, that offered hope: "He is the reflection of God's glory

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and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word." By recalling the ancient writer's discussion of Wisdom, the writer of Hebrews offered some reassurance in the midst of uncertainty, for the writer of the Wisdom of Solomon suggested that God's Wisdom held the world together. Wisdom is described as "insightful, holy, unique, diverse, refined, kinetic, pure, spotless, transparent, harmless, delighting in what is good, sharp, ²³unstoppable, overflowing with kindness, delighting in humans, steadfast, secure, not anxious, all-powerful, and all-seeing."³ Isn't that comforting? In the midst of all the ways the world could end, God's Wisdom holds us all together, working for good no matter what happens.

Throughout history, some have tried to predict when the end will come, with the most recent prediction by Ronald Weinland. He had suggested the end would occur in 2011, 2012, and 2013. Each time the end did not occur, he offered a revised date, with the most recent end to come on June 9, 2019. I guess we missed it.

When will the end come? I have no idea. Rather than focusing on this question, I suggest we instead focus on how to make the world a better place to live. While at the General Assembly last week, we struggled with how to make that possible. Although voting on resolutions won't change the world overnight, they do raise our awareness about issues that need our attention.

For example, what about those "68.5 million people [who] have been forcibly displaced from their homes globally for reasons of war, violence, persecution, climate change, economic injustice, impoverishment, colonialism and its legacy, and exploitation"? Many of these people just seek a safe place to live, away from the violence of their own countries. How does our global church respond to their cries? Resolution 1925 encourages us to "affirm a vision of God's family that is all-inclusive, accepting, and welcoming, recognizing the dignity of every human being; and rejects the divisive discourse of fear, xenophobia, bigotry, and racism that pervades the discourse on global forced

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migration, including as it relates to policy debates on immigration.”⁴

We might wonder how we can make an impact on this issue, and many of us may reply, “I have no idea.” One emergency resolution came to us last week with a suggestion. It was concerned about the steep reductions in refugee resettlement in our country. Although refugees have hit a high of 70.8 million people, the number of them allowed into the U.S. has declined down to 30,000 people. Many of the refugee resettlement programs have shut down due to the low numbers of refugees allowed in our nation. The resolution encouraged Disciples congregations to “engage in refugee resettlement among those who are arriving to their area” and to “share their faith values of hospitality for refugees, in both private and public statements, through all forms of media, to deepen awareness of vastly reduced refugee resettlement numbers.”⁵ In addition, we’re

encouraged to contact the President and legislators about this issue.

Will these resolutions make a difference in the lives of refugees? I have no idea. Will all Disciples agree on the issues of immigration? Probably not. Does that mean we should ignore the issue and hope it goes away? I don’t think so. The issue may seem as enigmatic, mysterious, and unknowable as the Book of Hebrews, and yet, God invites us into conversation to discern how to be God’s people in difficult times. The writer of Hebrews suggested that God spoke to the prophets in past days but that God now speaks through Jesus, writing that “the Son became so much greater than the other messengers” (1:4). God continues to speak to us today, especially when we face difficult times. When will we solve the difficult issues? I have no idea. Will it be easy. Probably not. Will God move among us as we discern how to respond. Definitely so.

¹ <http://blog.spu.edu/lectio/a-letter-without-a-home-introduction-to-hebrews/>

² <https://www.history.com/shows/doomsday-10-ways-the-world-will-end>

³ Wisdom of Solomon 7:22-23 CEB.

⁴ <https://ga.disciples.org/resolutions/2019/ga-1925/>

⁵ <https://ga.disciples.org/reports/2019/ga-1935/>