

## Devotion, Week of July 30, 2023

### Rev. Jeanne Simpson

Jim and I will be traveling to the United Kingdom from August 7 through August 23, and we will miss our church family. As we travel to Europe, I am always reminded about what it means for something to be “old.” In America, most of what we think of old architecture and places goes back to the late 1600’s or 1700’s. We have some early Native American sites, but not many.

In Europe, those sites from the 1600’s and 1700’s are often considered “new.” The old things are from neolithic, Roman, and early medieval times. Jim and I try to get to see those things – stone henges, old excavated villages with early use of planned cemeteries and farming, old druid ritual sites like Newgrange, etc. We were looking for an old Norman church in Scotland once and stopped to ask directions. The person told us how to get there and mentioned that there was a beautiful Victorian church on beyond it. We laughed – Victorian is just too new!

So, obviously, we tried to pick shore excursions that were older. We will start near Liverpool in the old Roman city of Chester, with the most complete city wall in Britain, the largest Roman amphitheater site, the oldest horse races, and a Norman cathedral. The cathedral was formerly a Benedictine abbey, and it dates from the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

In Dublin we will go to the Irish Emigration Museum in an old warehouse and look at the history of Irish migration since 500 A.D, including the mass migrations due to the potato famine in the 1800’s, which saw a huge influx of emigrants to America, probably including some of your ancestors!

We will visit old rural villages on the Isle of Man, castles in Wales and on Loch Ness, Dunvegan (the historic seat of the MacLeod’s, Jim’s family) on the Isle of Skye, Neolithic and Viking settlements in the Shetland Islands, and the tattoo in Edinburgh, a ceremony of drums and pipes with Scottish military bands. Traditionally, the “tattoo” was similar to our military “taps,” when a drumbeat was sounded to tell British soldiers to return to their quarters at night. Innkeepers promptly turned off their liquor taps and the drumbeats continued for a half hour – the grace period before soldiers were reported AWOL. Much different from today’s fancy, ceremonial presentation on the grounds of Edinburgh Castle.

We always love going back to the areas of the world that our ancestors came from. I am always amazed at the migration of people from the known to the unknown. As I think of the migrations of our ancestors from Europe, Africa, and India to America, I am reminded of the migration of Abram from Ur to the land of Canaan, and the attempts by the Israelites later to return from exile in Egypt and resettle in those lands that were once theirs. We are looking at that struggle as we go through the book of Judges. Migration requires courage, and in my opinion, always a reliance on God to help lead the way.

*Jeanne*