

Is It the Same Moon?
Rev. Dr. Anne Fisher, October 6, 2019
Oak Grove Presbyterian Church
Psalm 8

What a wonderful day on this World Communion Sunday! Thank you, Hakuna Matata Choir, for transporting us out of Bloomington, MN, to across the ocean to Kenya. Thank you for bringing your songs and acts of worship to us.

About a month ago, we introduced a theme for the church, which is “Sharing Our Story.” Sharing how it connects with our faith. Over the next weeks as we give thanks for our church, and think about how we will participate in, pray for and support our church with our financial resources, we will lift our faith stories. In that spirit, I would like to share a piece of my story with the story of this stole that I am wearing. It was made by a member of one of my former churches in Lagrange, Il.

This story starts with my niece, Sarah, who was a Peace Corps Volunteer. Her assignment was a little village in Senegal. So, my sister and I decided to visit her in Senegal. That visit transformed my life. The trip to get to her village was an adventure itself. Picture two middle aged women flying to Dakar, taking a sept plat (an old station wagon that seats 7 but carries at least 9 people), 11 hours to Tamba—that’s an overcrowded mini bus, and 1 ½ hours to be dropped by the side of the road. Finally, 10 kilometers by bike in 100 degrees to reach Laboya, the village. It was about the last time I was on a bike.

The first person we were introduced to was the village chief. For protection and security, the chief “adopted” us by giving us his name, TonJon. He also gave us first names. My sister, Sarah’s mother, was given Gund. I was given the name Mariama! I got the better deal there.

Over the next few days, we worked with the women in the village. They knew no English. Most of the time we sat together and they laughed at us as we tried to do the work that they could do so well. We tried to harvest the peanuts and use the giant pestle to mash the yucca root and carry the water from the well on our heads. We tried it all! The women were constantly working but they did it together in a group. Washing the clothes was a social event. I loved their camaraderie and joy as they did all these tasks.

I loved the nighttime. After the meal had been prepared and cleaned up, and the sun had set, the women would lay out mats and we would lie down and look at the stars in the sky with no ambient light around. One night, as we lay there quietly sharing, we saw the full moon rise. And one of the women asked, with Sarah translating, “Is that the same moon as the one where you are from?”

At that moment, it struck me these women never had a science class that taught them about the orbits of the moon and planets. They had little or no concept of where things were but knew we were from another place and another land. As we looked in the sky, they wondered, do we see the same things? Is it the same moon?

After all these years, when the moon is full, I remember Nana, Fanta and Balloo and the other women. I say a prayer for the people in that tiny village of Laboya, Senegal. Because we are connected even when we seem so different, and our understanding of things is different. We are connected. The God who made the stars and the moon in the sky made each of us in God’s own image. Each of us as unique as the stars in the heavens and yet we are connected.

I told this story to the church in Lagrange. As a parting gift, one of the members made this stole. It shows the skyline of Chicago and the huts in Laboya, and look, it is the same full moon that shone on us both.

As we celebrate World Communion, choirs such Hakuna Matata remind us that it is not only us. God created the world for all of God's people, no matter how different we are.

And on the backside of this stole, there is a cake, (because I like cake, so you know this is my stole!)

Thanks be to God and God's son who connects us to the world. Amen.

