

## “Alida’s Wine”

### Kick Off Sunday 2023

So, “Alida’s Wine” it says in the bulletin,  
without the ‘h’ of David’s whine.

Just to be clear, no, I have not become a -- *what is it called?*

An oenophile? A sommelier?

I think those are the right words for people who know something about wine.

That is not me.

I am not here to argue the merits of a Loire Valley Sancerre versus a Tuscan Pinot Grigio.

I’m talking about wine the way *Jesus* talked about wine.

The way Jesus talked about wine on one particular afternoon when a bunch of people were peppering him with questions.

It was pretty early in Jesus’ ministry,  
people were just getting to know him,

trying to figure out what he was up to with all his preaching and teaching and healing.

And people were already noticing that Jesus seemed to be a bit of a rebel; he didn’t seem to care about the rules that said who was in and who was out, whom you should talk to, or heal or help.

In fact, he seemed to be making up his own rules.

So these people came up to Jesus and said  
*what are you up to, Rabbi Jesus?*

And Jesus comes back with this line.

He says “Well, you can’t put new wine in old wineskins, can you?  
New wine goes in a *new* wineskin.”

You know how Jesus loved his parables and metaphors,  
and that’s a metaphor that people back then would have caught right away.

For us it takes a little explaining –  
a wineskin was a bag made of goatskin,  
and if you stomped on your grapes and put all that freshly-pressed juice into  
an old goatskin bag, once it fermented and bubbled up,  
it would bust that old bag wide open.

So what he was saying was  
“People, I’ve got something fresh and new for you,  
I’m here to talk about a God who loves you no matter what,  
and a Grace that will seek you out wherever you are.  
And all of this love and grace bubbling up,  
it can’t be contained by all the old rules,  
it doesn’t *fit* inside your old ways of thinking.”

Everything Jesus brought to this world was new wine,  
fresh and bubbling up,  
nothing that an old wineskin could contain.  
New wine for a new wineskin,  
new ways of looking at one another and loving one another,  
new ways of understanding God.

Two thousand years have gone by since then.  
But here’s the crazy thing –  
none of this has gotten old.  
Everything that Jesus preached and taught and lived,  
it’s *still* new wine.  
It’s still as fresh and bubbling and uncontainable as ever.  
Love and Grace and Hope and Mercy and Joy,  
all of that is still as new and lively as it ever was.  
Love is still as radical a way to live as it was two thousand years ago,  
and a God who just wants love – that’s still a game-changing idea.

So what we talk about here at Greenfield Hill,  
what we live here,  
what we have to offer to our community, our world,  
it's still something fresh and new.  
And not boring. For sure not boring.  
Yes, we are in a beautiful old historic building,  
in a church established before this country was born—  
but what goes on here,  
what we believe, what we do, what we share  
it's new wine. Bubbling up inside us,  
God's lively, loving spirit making us a lively, loving church.

What does that look like?

Well, this morning it looks like the energy of a whole bunch of kids  
running into the Church House across the street  
excited to be here and be with their friends.  
And what happens over these next months  
is that Sunday by Sunday,  
in stories and games and art and music  
they are going to find out just how much they are loved  
by God and by all of us.  
And that never gets old.  
Being shown how much you're loved? that never gets old.  
That is always fresh and new and oh so needed.

What else does new wine look like,  
God's lively loving spirit at work in this place?  
This past month it looked like a big pile of stuff,  
boxes of dishes and silverware and paper towels and detergent,  
donation upon donation from you, all to make sure  
that refugee families arriving here would find a home stocked with all that  
they needed.

The new wine of God's love looked like people from this church packing all that up and setting up apartment after apartment with love and lots of elbow grease, all of that saying to the world that the last and the least and the lost find a home in God's kingdom and among us. That is good news that never gets old, that is always fresh and new.

What else does it look like?

It looks like a congregation full of people – you - who are *constantly* asking

who needs God's love today, and how can I bring it to them?

And that means people coming together to create a ministry that cares for those who have too often felt alone with their struggles, our Shalom Ministry –

it means 90 adults picking up a hammer and driving to West Virginia last summer with 220 teens,

it means all the support groups that gather here so that love is shared here every day, every day,

and all of that is just a tiny glimpse of the lively loving spirit of this place.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus said "I've got something new to share."

And we're still sharing it.

That new wine, that bubbling-up Spirit of love and joy and hope, that's what we celebrate here,

that's what we offer to each other and to our world.

Because love and acceptance and mercy

have never stopped being new

and never stopped being needed.

We are beautifully historic, yes,

but we will never stop being fresh and new and Spirit-filled.

In this place, God's love just keeps bubbling up.

Thanks to you!