

The Reverend's Ruminations

According to my calendar, there are several more weeks left in the year—two full months in fact! But in the church's liturgical seasons we *are* nearing a new year. November concludes the season after Pentecost (often called Ordinary Time), and by December 2nd we will begin the season of Advent with its anticipation of Christmas. If you think I'm jumping the gun, then you haven't been to some of the big retail stores recently. Christmas trees and decorations were already occupying several aisles next to the Halloween costumes by mid-October, when the pretty autumn leaves hadn't even fallen off the trees!?! I'm sorry, but I'm not ready to even think about putting up Christmas decorations yet!

I'm sure there is plenty more I should be doing outside before the snow flies, so let's not rush winter just yet. As I recall, November still has at least one big holiday that many of us are "thankful" for—not to mention election day, Veteran's Day, and a little-known holiday known as Ellen and my 20th wedding anniversary on the 21st. It's hard for us to believe we've been married that long, but for many in this congregation 20 years together is just a drop in the bucket. Thank you for the inspiration!

In one of his many letters to his fledgling congregations and co-workers for Christ, Paul urged Timothy to *"...continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"* (2 Timothy 3:14-15, NRSV). In this month of thanksgiving, I challenge you to take a moment to think back and remember the Sunday school teachers or pastors who helped instill the faith you have today. Perhaps they were strict, maybe funny, or seemed old even when they instructed you as a child!?! But I bet one common trait is that they loved to share the Good News of Jesus with the children of your church.

I remember one particular teacher who I had more than one year for Sunday school back in Winnebago. His name was Harry, and while I don't remember what he had done for a living in his younger years, I do remember that his lifelong hobby was being a beekeeper. He and his wife would make the most delicious honey butter to give to the class for Christmas, but what he shared most was his love for Jesus. He knew what seemed to a young boy to be all the Bible stories by heart, and you could see a happy twinkle in his eye each time he began to share one with us in his soft, husky voice. I don't recall using a particular workbook or curriculum in his class, but each week he had a life lesson for us to glean from one of Jesus' teachings. I give thanks for a gentle old man who had the patience of Job with my lively classmates and me—and yet wisely wove the sacred words of scripture into instruction that helped us build a more mature faith in Christ.

If you're finding yourself indoors more often as the seasons change, you might consider curling up to read ahead in our lectionary passages for the month. We've been in the Gospel of Mark for much of the year, and in November we'll conclude with passages from chapters 12 and 13. They may not seem to have much to do with our changing seasons, but Jesus' discussion of the first commandment and the symbolism associated with the impending kingdom do bring our look at Mark's version of Christ's life to an appropriate transition point for Advent. If you like to look ahead even further, we'll spend December examining the first three chapters of Luke's Gospel.

As November wears on and *snow* inevitably makes its way into our vocabulary, I hope you remain warm, healthy, and safe!

Yours in Christ's service,

Rev. Cory Germain