Another Lenten season draws rapidly to a close. In the story of Jesus’ last days, we are just a week away from his and the disciples’ entrance into Jerusalem. Next Sunday is Palm Sunday and our worship will focus on that triumphal entry recalling the celebration and enthusiasm of the crowd. Then moving on to recall and focus on the events of the week that followed. Jesus last supper with the disciples, his arrest, trial, Golgotha and the cross are on the horizon. Still there is much that the disciples don’t know and their questions and learning continue. They are still confused by Jesus’ talk about suffering and death.

Some years ago, I bought a book titled, “The Jolly Postman”, subtitled “or Other People’s Letters. It contains a set of envelopes each containing a note or letter. A letter of apology to Mr. and Mrs. Bear from Goldilocks, an envelope addressed to the Occupant, Ginger Bread Bungalow with a witches’ supply mail order catalogue, a letter to Mr. V. Bigg Mile High House, Beanstalk Gardens with a “Thinking of You” postcard from Jack, a letter to H.R. H. Cinderella, a letter to B.B. Wolf Esq. from a law firm on behalf of Miss Riding Hood threatening to call in the Wood Cutter and if necessary all the King’s horses and all the King’s men, also warning him that the three little pigs are resolved to sue him for damages, and a Birthday card for Goldilocks from Mrs. Bunting and baby.

I tell you about this book because as we read from the 1st letter to Timothy we are reading other people’s letters. Paul, an apostle of considerable standing in the early church, is thought to have met Timothy when Paul was about 48 years old and Timothy about 33 years old. Timothy, a Christian from his childhood on was unmarried at the time he met Paul and accompanied Paul on several of his missionary journeys. Timothy was ordained by Paul and the church elders and is thought to have gone on to serve in several of the early churches. Paul and Timothy are not together and so Paul writes a letter to his young friend.

As I read todays’ reading there were a couple of verses that caught my attention. The first was Paul’s encouragement that Timothy “Have nothing to do with prophane myths and old wives’ tales.” Might Paul have been prophetically looking forward to our present times of conspiracy theories, misinformation and disinformation making the rounds, Not, likely but that doesn’t mean that it isn’t sound advice to which we might pay attention and therefore benefit.

The second verse of which I took note states,” These are the things you must insist on and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but set believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Where was this verse when 46 years ago, when I was a 25 year old ordinand and as Pam Thomas delights in telling me, “still wet behind the ears.”? I say this, but mostly in jest, because those first congregations in Fort St. John and North Pine did not despise my youth and for the most part took me and the things I had to say more seriously than I either expected or wanted them to. Only once do I recall having had reason to identify myself as the United Church minister to someone in the community and having them say, ”Are you not very young to be a minister?”

Sometimes I think I am more at risk right now of being seen as old, out of touch and irrelevant. But I don’t think that very often. Jan Arden might call me insensitive.

Over all I find myself wondering what it felt like for Timothy to receive this encouraging letter. Did it lift his spirits? Did it encourage him to believe and persevere in his cause, his ministry? Did it increase his credibility, his authority, his confidence, his sense that he was not alone? Did it give him increased courage with which to meet a challenge or all challenges?

In the times in which we live, do I, do we need to receive a letter like this, a message like this? Perhaps, just as importantly or even more importantly do we need to be sending letters, messages like this to others? If, as the church, the body of Christ, followers and disciples, justice seekers, we do not send such messages to each other and to others, who will? Can we hear Paul speaking to us through his letter to Timothy and if we can will we let it make a difference in our hearts and minds so that we can make a difference in the lives of others and make a in the world?