

The Pastor's Report

Greetings my Sisters and Brothers,

Action and reaction. Cause and effect. The linearity and irreversibility of time which also repeats, cycles, and spirals toward some end. Stimulus and response. Freewill or providence. Karma. Dr. Seuss' "The Waiting Place." Large thoughts for a lovely day. I would invite you to join me in them.

Last week I was sitting in my recliner and I had the realization that I was relaxed. Not just *relaxing*, but RELAXED. The muscles in my neck and shoulders weren't tense. My mind was not racing or fixated, and there was nothing lurking below the surface. I was breathing deeply and slowly. It was a novel feeling and, if I am being aware and honest, not something I have felt for a very long, long time. Moreover, this sense of relaxation was not something I had conjured or caused to happen. It was just there. Then it wasn't. But it will be again.

Fair disclosure, it is a mere two days since returning from Buffalo where we had calling hours for my mother, Nancy Lyon, and I officiated at her memorial service the following day. I am still very much processing and decompressing. Not necessarily her death which occurred on Palm Sunday, but from these past ten years since she suffered a catastrophic stroke which left her paralyzed, without speech, and requiring constant care. The tiredness, weight, and worry of 10 years is beginning to lessen and lift. I am grieving. Not for the end of her life, but for the end of our living which happened slowly over the course of a decade. I feel as if I am still groggy in waking up from a bad dream.

Adding to this heady and emotional mix is the theology of it all. It is not like I couldn't go there, or hadn't been there this entire time. However, it has been ground down to a finer point now. Less a question held at bay unasked as it had been for too long, and more a sense of resolution, or recking, or realization. So, of course, as the monthly task of writing the Pastor's Report has rolled around once more I thought I would share with you what I believe I have learned. At least at this stage in the journey.

Retreat coach Linda often says, "We don't control our circumstance, only our reaction to them." I am not sure how much control I have, but upon reflection I can see that certain important and defining choices were made. I say choices, but it was less about me deciding and more about having received alternatives by means of grace not my own. Gifts may be a more accurate word choice. Sitting here a few weeks out from her death, I cannot help but admit the greatest of these gifts has been a profound and utterly deep sense of gratitude.

People often wonder about the value, purpose, and process of having faith. Specifically, what it gains a person to have it. To that I would answer, the ability to be grateful rather than angry, or bitter, or sad, or resentful, or dumbfounded, or frustrated, or numb, or...you name it. Anything other than grateful. Grateful is what I am, and grateful is what I seek to be. So to all of you out there, who also reside here in my heart, I would like to say *thank you* for walking with me and my family these past ten years. For all you did, and everything I did not have to do. We simply could not have done this without you.

- (Rev.) Mike

"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful." - Col. 3:15

