



March 17, 2025

During my last pastorate, my four-month sabbatical coincided with Lent. I journeyed alone through the forty days and six Sundays of Lent from Ash Wednesday through the Saturday of Holy Week. It was a fruitful time for me spiritually as I read, prayed, and kept a journal of the insights I gleaned while studying scripture and reading a book of Lenten sermons by Fleming Rutledge.

I really needed the time away but I really missed being part of my church family. Attending worship services at other churches helped, but it wasn't the same as being with my congregation.

It's been said you can't be a Christian alone and it's true. Jesus called twelve disciples, not one. On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon believers who were gathered together, not upon individual believers where ever they were. The Spirit birthed the Church in those people of faith that day and gifted each one with some of the abilities the Church needed to grow strong. From then on, "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."^[1]

In other words, they became a faith community. Here's how a young Christian woman describes what that is: "A place where we can be real, authentic, honest about our past, and share our fears and hopes for the future. A place where we can embrace our brokenness as humanness and accept one another in the midst of it all. A place where imperfection is received with open arms and people stand ready to remind us that we are all imperfect people.

Somewhere we can laugh together, cry together, sing together, shout together.”^[ii]

I would add one more adjective to the phrase “we are all imperfect people” – the word ‘forgiven.’ Yes, we are all imperfect – we are all sinners – but we are forgiven. The Season of Lent invites us to reflect upon our lives, confess our brokenness and sinfulness, and receive the assurance that nothing we do or fail to do can separate us from God’s love for us in Jesus Christ.

In my former church, we had weekly Lenten suppers. Each time, one of our members shared their journey of faith. I never knew what they would say, but I knew it would be ‘real, authentic and honest.’ I also knew our church family would “receive them with open arms” and would be blessed by what they shared. Indeed, it was a privilege to hear each other’s stories – “to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.” I believe sharing our stories, our worries and joys, our doubts and faith, our fears and hopes, is also an essential part of being an authentic faith community.

I hope you will gather with our church family for our Holy Week services on Palm Sunday morning and Good Friday. It’s important to journey with our Lord as he makes his way to the cross – “to weep with him” in his suffering so we can “rejoice with him” in his resurrection Easter morning.

I’ve experienced Lent, Holy Week, and Easter alone. Believe me, together is better! I’m very thankful I have our St. Andrews congregation to journey with each year. And I’m profoundly thankful to know that when our personal journeys take us through the peaks and valleys of life, we won’t be alone. We’ll be there for each other and our God whom we worship and serve together will be there, too, as Jesus promised: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”^[iii]

[i] Acts 2:42

[ii] <http://www.soulmunchies.com/what-is-christian-community>

[iii] Matthew 18:20

~Written by The Rev. Margie Osborn

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