



Monday Musing: June 17, 2024.
Entertainment...

Going to concerts is often a part of our teenage years. Some of us were able to see more concerts than others. Some of us continued to frequent concerts throughout our lives...or not. I love listening to my kids tell me about the concerts they go to and how much they are really moved by the whole atmosphere.

I remember seeing John Denver at, I believe it was, Maple Leaf Gardens. Later I saw Peter, Paul and Mary, and later still, Three Dog Night, both bands at Ontario Place. Ah the good old days! A few years ago, Josh took me to see Styx for my Mother's Day present and last year we went to see Alan Doyle. What fantastic experiences and memories we shared together! Which concerts have you seen in your lives? What really sticks out in your memories of those times? What do you remember most about that entertainment?

I remember the excitement of being together with hundreds, no, actually thousands, of other people standing, clapping, singing along, even dancing by our seats or in the aisles. I remember that shared thrilled feeling of seeing the famous musicians for real and experiencing their music in me, feeling the rhythm move through my whole body. It was their presence, their talent, their music and the story the lyrics told ... such power touching my soul! And it was also because of the company with me too.

So, what about church? What about worship?

In a service, we have words sung and spoken, stories told, music and if we are open to it, we can feel a presence with us and within us that lifts us up, excites us, and connects us to each other and to the source of our being too. But it is different because the focus is not on any of us at all. The focus is on God, our faith story, and our faith itself. What we do there is a part of ministry with and for each other.

Years ago, I was given a poster with advice to remember about worship. As some churches have become ever more business-like, the words of the poster have been adapted to reflect this as the years have gone by. Here is the wisdom I was given and that I pass on:

“When ministry becomes performance, then the sanctuary becomes a theatre, the dais becomes a stage, the congregation becomes an audience, worse yet, the shareholders; worship becomes entertainment, and people’s applause and approval become the measure of success instead of how and where they love and serve others. But when ministry is for God, God’s presence moves into and among us all. Then together we can know the indwelling of God among us, in the sanctuary, and we trust we are never alone.”

However it is that we celebrate our faith in our services, however it is we share the experience of what we call church or worship on Sundays, whether our services are liturgical or non-liturgical, traditional or contemporary, with gospel music or Taize, organ or piano, with long periods of silence, or not, with the sacramental elements of wafer or bread, wine or juice, the experience that we share has to hold God as central. It is about our relationship with our God and each other, with and within the Christ by the Spirit. And it includes the many ways we believe or understand our God to be.

But it is not entertainment. It is personal and communal. It is loving and assuring. It is about hope and promise. It is a spiritual, sacred and holy time. It is not entertainment and nothing any of us do should ever be about us. It is for us all to experience, to share and to enter into, all being welcome, within the divine presence together.

And there we are free to empty ourselves into that space, that we might be filled with new life to go to love and serve in our small corner of the world.

May such holiness be with you and within you when we're together and when we're apart,
Rev. Deb Foster, Minister, St. Andrew's United Church, Markham.
905-294-0351 minister@standewsmarkham.com

Prayer

Holy Presence, here and now, in the silence, in the words, sung and spoken,
In the gathering, and in the sending, may we be held, lifted, and moved,
And may we so live and love. Amen.

Scriptures this Week

I Samuel 17:1a-49	It's a big story. Its about David and Goliath.
Psalms 9	Of God's marvellous deeds.
2 Corinthians 6:1-13	Now is the time, the day of salvation.
Mark 4:35-41	Jesus stills the storm.

TR Question (theological reflection)

Words often have more meaning when accompanied by the rhythm of poetry, the sounds of music, and the images of nature, because it is then a richer, deeper experience touching our hearts and our minds. When, where, and how have you experienced God?

How did you feel, and where was God, when we painted the moccasin symbols on the walkway? How was God present in that moment of painting?

