

## Pastor's Letter

There was a pivotal moment, many years ago, when in the middle of Roseland Amusement Park...in the middle of a 3 minute rush of adrenalin known as the "Flying Bobs", I would announce to the riders, "Please remain seated. The ride is only half over. We will now go in reverse." Most folks were delighted. Some moaned. The vast majority survived.

Sometimes the spiritual journey feels a bit like the "Flying Bobs" of old: a series of ups and downs, and bumps and jolts, punctuated only very occasionally by brief moments of stillness, before the ride resumes. So the challenge becomes: "How do I find God in the midst of it all?"

Centuries ago, a desert monk came to his spiritual leader and asked the same question, "How can I find God?" The older priest responded, "Go back to your cell...and your cell will teach you everything." In other words, quieting the soul and waiting upon the Lord will yield the richest of fruit. (We can only imagine what the monk was muttering when he shuffled back to his room.)

"Go back to your cell...and your cell will teach you everything." More frightening words were never uttered! The last place most of us want to go is...**INSIDE**. We'd much rather remain a blur of distraction, careening from one thought to another, one T.V. show to another, one meeting to another, one relationship to another. The journey to the center of the soul is decidedly **NOT** for the faint of heart.

Some people would much rather hop a plane and climb a mountain in Nepal to seek enlightenment than stay at home in the solitude of their own living room...and pray...and wait. So, what's a body to do? What's the hope for the vast majority of us who'd rather tune into a reality show than enter the deepest reality of our soul?

This is where a little thing called "community" comes in. And it's a paradox: in community, we enter solitude... together. In a moment of prayer, for instance, during worship, we are "together in our separateness." We enter into a deeply personal realm...seated inches away from someone else entering **THEIR** deeply personal realm. And as crazy as this sounds, we find strength and support in praying together...separately. The same can take place at a retreat, before the evening meal, or beside a hospital bed. "Wherever two or three are gathered, there I am also."

Much in our world conspires to keep us distant from **BOTH** community **AND** from our deepest selves. Distrust, rancor, competition, and enmity are too often dominant in our midst. And yet, the Master offers us another, very different way. That is why, as Rev. Al Keeney commented at our March 2<sup>nd</sup> retreat, our faith is "counter-cultural" – as it "talks back" to the many voices in our midst that tell us **NOT** to love...either our neighbor **OR** ourselves.

"Please remain seated. The ride is not over." God is with us throughout the ride – a truth that will become more vivid for us, if we but take the time to listen and wait...together.

Tim

**Please note:** In the event of a snow (or other) emergency requiring cancellation of worship please call the church answering machine at 657-7030 to confirm that worship is cancelled. Every effort will be made to have a notice of cancellation recorded by 8am Sunday morning. In addition, e-mails will be sent out and notice given to WHAM. If all else fails, please call Tim Hamlin at 585-727-2938 before venturing out.