

## Pastor's Letter – December, 2014

I pulled the honey jar out of my kitchen cupboard intending to pour a bit of sweetness onto my English muffin. The honey had other ideas. I quickly learned that 55 degree honey is stubborn. It hates to be rushed. So the honey and I were at a stand-off: How long could the cold honey remain in the container? And how long could I wait for my breakfast? In the end, I cheated: I resorted to a butter knife...and extracted some of the reluctant honey, lest I be having English muffins for my dinner.

I find that there is generally an implicit pace to things – a pace we try to alter at our peril. Department stores aside, we can't rush Christmas. It will arrive on December 25<sup>th</sup>. Contrary to popular myth, clocks don't run any faster during December. It's the same pace it always is...roughly one second per second...one day in a day. However, I will grant you that there ARE moments when it feels like some sort of conspiracy to accelerate time to a ridiculous rate.

I was visiting family in Boston not long ago. After getting a bite to eat, we left the restaurant and found our car in the parking garage. (Behind lobster and baked beans, Boston's flag-ship commodity is parking garages!) We pulled up to the exit gate to pay our fee and be liberated to, once again, take our life in our hands on the Boston roadways. Upon inserting the parking ticket, the computer lit up with the following instruction: "Your fee is \$9225. Please insert your credit card." With one voice, we gasped "What?!", then "Don't DO it!"

Even taking into account inflated urban prices, this seemed a bit excessive. After identical results at 2 other automatic gates, we eventually found a "non-cyber" human who obligingly sprung us for a mere \$6. Never seemed like such a deal! Time keeps flowing at its usual pace. But not every computer believes it. Apparently, the parking garage computer accelerated our mealtime to last for 341 days!

Many spiritual traditions honor the practice of "living in the present moment", including Buddhism, Sufi Islam, and Contemplative Christianity. The "moment" is deemed precious. The present moment is the place of centering, of calm, of gratitude, of grace. And the practice of staying in the moment seems to be a good antidote to the break-neck, anxious living that so often characterizes the holidays.

About the only place that the "present moment" gets a slight nod is just prior to carving the turkey, when the knife hangs motionless, and folks take a hasty break to bow heads and give thanks. It's certainly better than nothing! But we might do well to expand the practice a bit, and make it a regular part of our holiday "diet." With any success, we might just begin to "live in the present moment" the whole year through.

Our worshipping community can often seem a bit out of date. We don't have I-pods or I-pads in the sanctuary. There's generally no "googling" during the sermon, (though there is undoubtedly "doodling"!) And the only "cloud" mentioned in church is the "cloud of witnesses." But for all our "anachronistic" tendencies, one thing we do that is cutting edge (not to mention deeply healing) is "live in the moment." It is a delightful thing...especially in the middle of holiday hurry...to pause for prayer, relax for a little reflection, and linger with friends over a drink and a snack.

As we enter the time of waiting we call "Advent", I'm eager to share some moments with you all – slow, gracious, peaceful moments. May the peace of Christ - "the peace which the world can neither give nor take away" - dwell richly in your hearts...in every moment.

Tim