

Transforming Love

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5th Sunday Worship: Our Stories

This is going to be Transforming Love 1 - not 101 - 1 - I taught for 33 years and never got past second grade, after all! When I received an e-mail two Sundays ago asking me to consider Transforming Love - and perhaps talk about a moment that transformed my life - I was afraid! I've never had that "born again" moment - never a flash of "this has changed my life". How would I be able to talk about a transforming moment in my life?

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that, for me - and probably most of us, transforming love isn't something realized in a flash, but something revealed over a lifetime of trying to figure it all out. A lifetime of trying to live into its promise - or its demand.

Growing up, my parents always stressed the importance of learning to love one another. God so loved us that Jesus came into the world. Jesus taught that we should love one another and share what we have. I think, right from the beginning, I took that to heart, but as I grew, it became harder to understand. It was easy to love my family, my friends - but what about strangers and those I really didn't like for one reason or another? I began trying to understand why people did or said the things they did. Understanding, even if I disagreed, opened a path to empathy and my ability to love....and yet, on-line theology to which I ran says I don't love because I have compassion for others, but because God has compassion for all of us. So now where do I go with this? Have I every truly grasped this point? Panic began to overtake me. What do I say? My solution was to give up and go to bed - hoping an answer would come to me the next day.

It came earlier than I anticipated. I woke just before 3 in the morning with our Sanctuary Choir singing in my head the loudest crescendo of the offertory that Sunday - "Too late my brother! Too late — but never mind. All my trials, Lord, soon be over." - and then, a memory of my parents.

My parents added onto my house in 1996 and lived with me for the remainder of their lives, It was an experience for which I will always be grateful. Mom died in 2010, at the beginning of my last year of teaching, Dad's health had been failing for several years and she never thought she would be the first to go. She was worried about leaving me with Dad, who was losing his sight and the independence that goes with that...and, as a result, sometimes his sense of humor! As it turned out, the two years with Dad, though filled with challenges for both of us, were good ones.

About 6 months after Mom died, I had a dream. It started out a crazy one - me with a giant headboard riding on the trailer hitch of a pickup truck in front of the Burlington Police Department, and then in my bedroom directing a construction crew on where to place the headboard. I turned to the bedroom doorway and there stood Mom and her sister, Auntie Marge, both with the dark hair and favorite faux fur coats they had in the mid forties. I thought, "Oh my - they're both dead - I'd better go over and give Mom a kiss!" As I leaned over to kiss her cheek, Mama whispered in my ear, "I think of you every day." - and then I was awake.

I told Adrienne Carr, our Associate Minister at the time, about my dream. She said, "That was no dream - that was a visit." I believe her. Not for a while, I hope, but the ultimate transforming love for me - and for all of us - is yet to come - the time when it all becomes clear and I am once again in the arms of my family and with my God.