Rev's Reflections

An Evolving Cohort

During the winter, someone showed me a picture they'd taken during worship. I gasped, seeing not the "fun uncle" I think of myself as, but instead a grandpa struggling to get up.

Last week, I got terrible news about two men I know, both my age. One was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. The other died quite suddenly after a massive stroke, and his brother, who was the frontman for a popular alternative rock band in the 90's looked old speaking at the funeral. I still think of him as that skinny kid on MTV with a weird hat and scraggly beard.

We've always been the young group, and the proof for me is that most of the people running this country — and the congregations I've served — have been older. Often much older.

And now, suddenly, three of the four people running for president and veep are my age or younger. It's bizarre to see two GenXers on one ticket, people with a similar outlook to mine on priorities and leadership, sharing the cautious optimism of our generation. They seem young, energetic, and hopeful. At least to me.

I've always understood that every generational cohort ages in a way that is different from preceding generations. Each group sees the world through lenses shaped by shared experiences, and builds new institutions to meet their own needs as they as they age. Now I find myself wondering what it's going to be like being in a 65-plus community* with Kamala and Tim, or at least people like them. We'll get each other's sarcastic jokes at the very least. I'm no longer imaging myself trying to fit in the retirement communities my grandparents lived in. We'll have our own, that will be what we want and need.

Middle age, I am reminded in the last couple of weeks, is an unending series of invitations to rethink everything we thought we knew, and see ourselves differently at every milestone we come to.

In Peace,
Rev Denis

* Communities that used to be for ages 55-plus are quickly becoming 65-plus, and may be limited to 70-plus before I qualify.