Reverend Melanie – August 2023

"And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching." --Hebrews 10:24-25

When we see the word "provoke," it is usually a negative thing; people are provoked to poor behavior, lashing out in anger. But the true meaning of the word is, according to Merriam-Webster, "to call forth a feeling or action."

This is the call of the writer of *The Epistle to the Hebrews* in the New Testament, to provoke one another to love (a feeling) and good deeds (action). Somehow the word "provoke" is stronger than just telling people to love each other. Think about how it feels to be provoked to angry outburst--it's real work to remain calm and avoid acting on the provocation.

What if provoking each other to love and good deeds had a similarly strong effect. What if when we provoke each other in this positive way, we did get out there and love one another and do good deeds because it would be too hard to avoid?

This would be a great thing if we felt our positive emotions as strongly as we feel our negative ones--if we responded to love and grace as strongly as we react to hurt and anger.

As we work to be more involved in our community, let's work to be more provocative, let's get out there and be a force for love, an inspiration for good deeds, a reminder that people caring for each other and for all of creation is what we were created for to begin with.

The Day to which this passage refers is the time when God's reign arrives. It's not a literal day, but rather it will happen over time. It is the Day (not literal) when we will all see each other as brother and sister, when we will share all resources, when no one goes hungry and no one sleeps outside, when we treat each other as we each want to be treated.

Let's provoke each other and those around us, encouraging and valuing one another until we can all live and love in peace and prosperity.