

Pastor's Blog: Snow Day!

As I write this, the snow is coming down outside and it's been coming down for almost 24 hours. The kids and dogs in the park are having a great time and my snowy-day instincts are kicking in. I grew up mostly in Idaho and Iowa. I lived for my young adult years in Chicago. Those are some snowy places. On snow days, my instincts tell me to shovel and clear the walk ways, then bake. So this morning, I shoveled the driveway and the sidewalks in front of our house, and the neighbors on either side. I am the only person in Seattle that I know who shovels snow. Most people around here have a snow removal strategy that involves waiting for it to melt. My motto is shovel early and shovel often. After I finished shoveling (the first time), I mixed up cinnamon roll dough, rolled it out, and it's rising now before it goes in the oven. Snow brings back the traditions of my past.

This week in worship, we'll be talking about the traditions that uphold us and the traditions that shape us and form us. We'll explore how some traditions at church help support our faith and how others can sometimes get in the way of it. I remember as a child we had a tradition that every Sunday I would put a shiny nickel in my shiny red purse and when the offering plate came around during worship, I would put the nickel in the plate. That tradition has established for me a tradition of sharing of what I have as a discipline, not because I know where the money goes all the time, not because it will make a difference to someone else, but because it shapes who I am as a giver. In that time period, my family also had a tradition of going to Poppin' Fresh Pies after church for lunch with my aunt and uncle on Sundays. I may associate those shiny nickels with getting pie later too. I will admit to mixed motives.

Other traditions have a different effect, though. Last evening, while it was snowing, during the superbowl, I gathered with about 800 other people in a crowded church sanctuary to hear author Nadia Bolz-Weber speak. It says something about what has happened with the traditions of the church in America that so many would gather at such a time to listen to a "foul-mouthed, tattooed lady pastor from Denver" as she describes herself. She talked about the traditional messages that churches have given about sex and bodies. Her conviction from her work at the church she serves is that those messages have not served those who received them and have forced many to ask the question, "How can I be true to who God made me and also go to church?" I think it's important to hear the question and the challenge. I think it's important for those of us who are part of the tradition, who are still in the church, to take seriously the messages that have been given by our tradition. I think it's important to begin to imagine how the tradition could give messages that honor the way that God has made each human in God's image. I think it's important to listen and love and learn.

This week, think about the traditions that you have grown up with. Are there some that serve you well and some that don't? Have you adapted, changed, or re-authored some traditions from your family of origin? Can you name why they needed to change? What about traditions from your church?

~ Pastor Laura