

For the Journey
June 25/26
Rev. Dave Crawford



“The earliest reference to the Resurrection is Saint Paul’s, and he makes no mention of an empty tomb at all. But the fact of the matter is that in a way it hardly matters how the body of Jesus came to be missing because in the last analysis what convinced the people that he had risen from the dead was not the absence of his corpse but his living presence. And so it has been ever since.”

- Frederick Buechner, Listening to Your Life, 1992.

The good news this week, soccer-wise, is that our Canadian team, for the first time ever, has advanced to the next round at the World Cup. Canada will play South Africa Sunday at 1 pm. This is a good match-up for Canada and they have a solid chance of advancing further in the competition, to the final 16.

Whenever I hear South Africa mentioned, in any context, I'm taken back immediately to my brief time in that nation more than three decades ago. The memories are clear: my Canadian host getting us lost in the township of Alexandra as night was falling, after we'd been delayed visiting some of his parishioners, after the car he'd borrowed had its side windows smashed by thieves. Driving along the freeways and observing the buffer zone of fenced-off wilderness between the city of Johannesburg itself and some of the surrounding townships, apartheid manifested geographically. And the incredible faith of the Christians we met, black South Africans in both Alexandra and Tembisa, faithfully trusting in God's living presence with them in the struggle, their conversation dotted with references to Jesus, to new life, to hope. What Buechner refers to above is what those poverty-stricken, racially segregated Christians embraced. They had a joy about them. It was puzzling to me, inspiring too of course.

One of the old summer camp songs many of us are familiar with is titled, "We are One in the Spirit", and the key verse proclaims, *"And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, yes they'll know we are Christians by our love."* The love we share as a church, a faith community is the love of Christ among and within us. Our sharing of it has to do with the attitudes and behaviours he taught us, and still teaches us: forgiveness, non-judgment, compassion, kindness, avoiding gossip, praying for each other, and all the others. Mostly it is a shared assurance of faith in the promised enduring, strengthening presence of the risen Christ among us, regardless of what life has in store for us such that even when trudging through life's dark valleys (Psalm 23) we might have a joy about us.

Some of us are approaching this summer with a sense of excitement and anticipation. Others among us are readying themselves for more serious, more difficult life challenges that remain unaffected by seasonal changes and the "lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer". Let us remember them this summer. Let us pray for them. Let us reach out in friendship and Christian love. For while *"we may not know what the future holds, but we know Who holds the future"* (W. Willimon)

Grace and peace,

Rev. Dave