



Monday Musing: September 16th, 2024.
Friends...

Years ago, somewhere around 2004, my kids recommended a tv sitcom that they were really enjoying. “It’s called *Friends*,” they said. So, I watched a few episodes, and I discovered I liked it, well honestly, I was hooked! That’s when my kids said, “Too late Mom, it’s the final season. It started in 1994!” I just figured, oh well, that’s what re-runs are for.

What I learned though, was that the show *Friends* represented to my kids what they hoped for when they would be in their 20s and early 30s. They hoped for the type of close friendships, the real, genuine, caring friends who met you where you were, who laughed and cried with you, and who were there for you, and most importantly, really shared life with you. This meant hanging out, going places, sharing meals, and experiencing all the adventures together life could offer. For my kids, and their friends, that’s what real friendship is all about. And they did have a small group that kind of mimicked that tv show.

Skip ahead a few years from the early 2000s, and the new friends my kids started making were on Facebook as did most of us – an entirely different experience of friendship. It wasn’t so much about making friends as collecting them like a commodity. The more friends you had showed how popular you were, except they weren’t people you necessarily ever saw, spoke to, or shared time. ‘Friends’ seemed the wrong word for this collection.

Many of us joined the new social media platform and others that started up too. We built our profiles, managed our posts and our tweets, grew our followers, followed others, and hopefully, still kept real friends, you know, the kind more like the sitcom on tv. But real, honest friendships need nurturing. Real, honest friends care for each other and spend time together too – real time. Real friends do that ‘hanging out’ and it includes love.

Real close friends get to know each other so deeply because of the way they spend time together, being vulnerable to each other by sharing loves, hurts, sorrows, fears, beliefs and more. And real friends are those you can call at the last minute or when you need help.

Real friends can reconnect too, picking up like it was yesterday, when life actually moves them apart. I have a couple of friends I used to work with in the 1980s and early 90s when I was with the Ontario Government. We don’t get to see each other much as we live further apart, but when we get together in Toronto, we pick up where we left off. And it is always so good to see them. But our friendship began because of the time we spent together and how we shared life in those times.

Over the years, in the church in which I’ve served, I have seen how so many of you have real friends and those friendships have grown in and through being ‘in church’ together. Some of you long timers have friendships that began literally decades ago. You met, you got

involved, you married, raised your kids, and were there for each other through celebrations, divorces, deaths, and even moving away. When I listen to your stories, many of your memories sound like episodes from *Friends*. What a gift that is to have such long time, trusting, caring friends. It is no wonder that the friendships on the sitcom were the dreams for kids for their lives too. Maybe partly because they didn't and don't have the community of church, as many of you have had, through which to make those kinds of friends.

Making such close friends takes spending time together to get to know each other.

We're in Creation Time in the church when we focus on our 'friendship' with nature. And it takes time to get to know the forests, the trees, rivers, mountains, plants and animals and to share sunrises and sunsets with and within them too. It also takes time to get to know God out in nature, and in the church with others as well. When you can really share your heart with God, and with those around you your thoughts, questions, doubts about God, then you are on the path to making ... well ... real friends. And when life 'happens,' with your friends, sometimes there are no words, only – love.

May you have close friends throughout your lives, may they be there for you and you for them,

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Prayer

Holy One, beyond us, with and within us,
You dwell also in the spaces between us,
Where our stories, our doubts, our fears, and joys are told,
Where food and time and adventures are shared.
You are there, in the spaces in which our friendships grow,
And where we grow in coming to know you.
Amen.

Scripture this Week

Proverbs 31:10-31	A tribute to a woman.
Psalms 1	Blessed are those who follow God's law.
James 3:13-4:8a	Wisdom from above is gentle and peaceable.
Mark 9:30-37	Whoever welcomes a child, welcomes me.

TR Question (theological reflection)

Where is God in your close friendships?