



Monday Musing: June 23, 2025.
Memories...

Sometimes when Karen and I travel to our hiking destinations, we drive through small towns. Canada was made up of small towns long ago. Remember those four corners where there would be a gas station, a general store, a bank, a post office, with a nearby one room schoolhouse, and oh, a church or two as well? One by one these things have changed or disappeared.

Four corners are more complex with ramps and lights and lanes. General stores and gas stations are often boarded up as there are big box shopping centres and gas bars nearby. Banks went on-line. Post offices are often now inside pharmacies or Walmart or wherever! One room schoolhouses closed as a public education system grew with the population and larger public schools were built and, when necessary, kids were bused, and then they moved on to the city high schools, universities and colleges and new lives - so very different from their small rural town upbringing. Churches have closed too, and for many reasons. Newer churches have been built in larger communities to serve an even larger catchment area beyond the small rural town. Large catchment areas require large churches to hold many people, with many cars, coming from miles, no, kilometres away! Yes, one by one these things and more have changed. Yet some small rural churches still exist even if they find themselves suddenly in a subdivision!

Do you remember your one-room schoolhouse? What memories do you have of your small rural hometown? The buildings and the way of doing things may have changed, or gone, but the memories linger. That's because those times when we were young in our hometowns, wherever they were, whatever they were like, they shaped us. We are shaped especially by our childhood and youth years. That's why they're so precious. That's why we hold onto them. That's often why change is so hard.

But change happens. All things evolve. It is not likely anyone will attempt to run a school in this one room schoolhouse again! I took this picture on the weekend along a rural road in Gatineau, Quebec. Memories for some, not for others. Time moved on. The way of doing things changed.

Yet, as much as this building or any old building is broken down and decaying, it was a place of learning and growing, making memories and stories, shaping kids into who they are today. Our vitality is in who we are, how we are, not in the old logs and stone basements. Same goes for our churches. Our churches are the people we are, from the past, with what we have learned, how we have grown, memories we've made and all that has shaped us, our story, and our faith. The church is the people. The life in us is

our vitality. The story in us is our living faith. The building is the home in which we live and out of which we serve. Many buildings are still viable church homes.

Many of our churches across Canada are still vital and viable serving in small rural towns, or near to larger communities, or even tucked beside skyscraper offices and condos. It never really is about size. It is about vitality and faith, commitment and service. When a church is no longer serving the needs and making a difference in the lives of those around them, then with the old one room schoolhouse, well...all things evolve, they change with the changing times. Our call is to stay strong in faith and kindness, to love and serve, to make a difference and be the difference in our small corners of our towns, or cities, in the world.

Peace to your hearts always, with and within all your memories of times gone by,
Rev. Dr. Deb Foster, Minister, St. Andrew's United Church in Markham
905-294-0351 minister@standrewsmarkham.com

Prayer

Holy God of time,
In what was, in what is, and in what will be,
Strengthen us, work with us, shape us, encourage us,
That we might make and be the difference
That small town or large communities need.
May our vitality flow with your Spirit of Love.
Amen.

Scripture

2 Kings 2:1-14	Elisha sees Elijah ascend to heaven.
Psalms 77	I cry to God in my distress.
Galatians 5:1-25	Called to freedom; the fruit of the Spirit.
Luke 9:51-62	Foxes have holes, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

Bible Bits

There is God and LORD God in the scriptures, especially noticeable in the Hebrew scriptures. Do you know why LORD is capitalized? It is because the four letters represent the four Hebrew letters for YHWH, the name for God. And as you never say the name of God, YHWH, LORD is written instead. But not by all ancient writers. Different ways of referring to God reveal different writers and different times. How do you refer to God? Which words do you use or not use, and why?