



Monday Musing: Tuesday May 19, 2026!
Dispatched...

On the weekend, I visited a very small farm, so small, it only has pigs. There are four: Dodge, Ford, Mercedes and Lotus. Two females, two males. The guardian of the pigs is a conservation biologist. I had a lovely chat with him about pigs. He actually becomes attached to the piglets when they arrive; he cares for them, feeds them, builds a relationship with them. They do with him too, as well as with each other.

He talked about the domestication of pigs from wild boars about 10,000 years ago, and that if these pigs were to get out into the forest alone, they would revert back to many of their 'old' traits and behaviours and they can be very aggressive. I was thinking humans would too. Didn't we all have to read 'Lord of the Flies' in high school? Anyway, the guardian shared his love of animals, all species, that we have much to learn from them, and that we owe a lot to animals, including our own lives.

He wrapped up the chat mentioning that come October, Dodge, Ford, Mercedes and Lotus will be dispatched and will return to be served on plates next summer. Now I have been in the United Church since 1982, so the word 'dispatched' rang a bell. I knew what that meant before he mentioned the plates.

Years ago, when going to church was the thing to do in Canada, the United Church was the largest Protestant denomination with nearly 3 million people self-identifying as belonging to the United Church. Church life was part of life itself. But then, churches began to decline. Yet, we were still doing the big three: hatch, match and dispatch. In fact, many people would say for baptisms, marriages, and funerals, go to the United Church. They'll take care of anyone, no pre-requisites or commitments needed. Now that wasn't entirely true if you look at our old Manuals, but...in time...ya, we did become known as the church that hatched, matched and dispatched. Just ask around and see how many people were baptized in the United Church in the 1950s and 60s, how many married in the 1970s and 80s, and well, you can't ask, but statistics will tell you, we've presided over many funerals. Hatch. Match. Dispatch. That was us.

In the last century, church family and denominational allegiance was important to people. Years back, if you moved to a new town, you would look for a new United Church. Years later, if you moved to a new town, you did some church shopping for the church that you preferred for distance, style, windows, music, children's programmes, etc., no matter the denomination or theology. And then, well now for sure, if you move to a new town, you are more likely to look for the possible activities available and maybe not go to church again at all. Today, for those who do not go to church, but who

still feel connected to those rites of passage (baptism, marriage and funeral), they can just hire an officiant (non-clergy) who will provide whichever service they want, not affiliated with any church family, tradition or denomination. Sometimes, there are no faith beliefs as such at all.

A lot has changed for people in Canada, for church going people, and for their children and grandchildren. Surprisingly, even the end-of-life services for church folk are often taken out of the church and held other places, like funeral homes, community centres or restaurants. Yet, these Celebrations of Life are not really new. You see, in the church, funerals were always Celebrations of Life, celebrating and honouring the life, through death to new life, of those who have died and believed it was a part of their faith journey with God and the church. This was the cycle of life (before the Lion King).

All things change through time, whether for the church, an empire, a society, or a civilization. In 2008, Phyllis Tickle, a lecturer on church and spirituality, wrote that about every 500 years or so, the church goes through a transformation. We're in that 500 or so year mark now. So, I'm thinking two things: the church itself is being re-hatched or hatched again; and, I'm really glad I'm not a pig.

Prayer

Holy One, of what was, what is and what is to be,
Cycles of life, births, deaths, new life again,
Hatched, matched, dispatched, and hatched again.
Transformations, endings and beginnings, always and everywhere,
All within your creative and redemptive actions in the world. Amen.

Scripture this Week

Acts 2:1-21	The Holy Spirit is experienced in wind and flame.
Numbers 11:24-30	Moses shares the spirit that was given to him.
Psalms 104	God's spirit brings life and renewal.
I Cor 12:3b-13	One spirit, many gifts.
John 20:19-23	Jesus appears behind the locked doors.

TR Question (theological reflection)

Where, when, and how have you noticed the cycle of life, that is, hatch, match and dispatch, in your life and in the life of your church?

May you come to notice the spirit of love through all the cycles of life,
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