

Day 6- Advent Devotional message from Rev. Dr. Robin Hawley Gorsline

On Tuesday, as part of our devotional series in Advent focused on Follow the Star, Jim Garner suggested we think about our own star. What/who moves and guides us?

Spirit is my star.

Here is a story that speaks to that truth.

A dear friend recently gave me a beautiful mug. Knowing my love of trees, she gave me a mug with pine trees etched around it. As I sipped my first cup of tea from it, I decided the trees are White Pine.

You may not know this, but I do: the White Pine is the State Tree of Michigan (my birthplace and home until my mid-30s). In that moment of identifying the tree, I felt a stirring in my heart, my soul, a longing to be back there, particularly at Gorsline Farm Nursery in Milfordl). That was the nursery/tree farm owned by my parents where beginning in upper elementary through college years I worked. We sold ornamental shrubs and trees for other peoples' yards. We sold many kinds of trees, including my favorite: White Pines.



photo by Robin Hawley Gorsline

As I felt that pull, I had a vision of Advents past when I would assist my father and our hired man in loading pine trees (and I admit spruce and fir trees, too) into peoples' cars to take home for Christmas.

But these were not cut trees. My father hated it when people killed trees for Christmas. He wanted trees to live, not die, to celebrate Jesus. So in the earlier autumn months, people would come to the farm and pick out the tree they wanted for their living room. We'd tag it, they would pay for

it, and then before the ground was frozen we would dig the tree and wrap the root ball in burlap. People would then come to pick up their trees in the

several weeks before Christmas. My father taught them how to keep the tree alive until Spring when it could be planted in their yard. Thus, Advent became a time of the promise of life.

So, you think, well, Robin, that's interesting. But where does Spirit come in?

For about two years, I have been on a journey of connecting with nature in new ways, especially trees, changing my relationship with Creation. I knew some of that came from growing up where trees were central to daily life.

However, what I had not considered until this connection with the living Christmas trees, through the gift of the mug from my friend, was the role of my father, a man I loved but with whom I had a very complicated, at times difficult, relationship.

The gift of the mug is, I believe, Spirit speaking to me: reconnect Robin with your roots, give thanks to your father, love trees to health and long life, help others see why we must stop killing so many trees, erasing so much forest.

Spirit uses all sorts of ways to touch us, even mugs. I look forward to the next gift of Spirit.

How is Spirit touching you?