

Today's Devotional is provided by Darryl Walker

My 60-Year Lenten Journey

For nearly two millennia Lent has been a time for inward reflection in the Catholic faith. Following the Reformation, the first Protestant congregations continued the practice of Lent, but as Protestants further divided, some Lenten practices were no longer seen as integral to their worship experience.

My extended family was primarily Baptist and Church of God. Thus, Lent was not observed with one exception: eating fish on Good Friday.

By the age of 15, I was growing increasingly uncomfortable with the churches my family attended. This was especially true of the conservative Church of God and their belief that once "saved," members lived a life above sin.



The turning point for me occurred when the choir director was outed as a "sissy," fired from his position and ousted from the church. This very conservative religious attitude, combined with my increasing awareness of my

same-gender attraction, led me to go "church shopping." I did not confide to my family the effect that the outing had on me. Surprisingly, my announcement that I wanted to find a new church was greeted by profound disappointment but little opposition.

Over the next few Sundays, I attended a variety of other traditions services. Then, I attended a Congregational service where my high school choir had sung at a special event. I felt that this denomination was right for me. My very first time at Plymouth Congregational Church, I came forward when the doors of the church were opened. The next Sunday, I was baptized and formally brought into membership. My school choir director and his wife were there that Sunday and were so happy that I

had joined their church. Later, I learned that there had been considerable discussion about me as it was unusual for a lone teenager whom most did not know, to show up and join their church.

It was at Plymouth that I first experience the monthly observance of Holy Communion and where I learned about the season of Lent and the other seasons of the Christian calendar. I cherish my Christian education and development as a teenager at that church.

So, here I am now in the middle of another Lent. My earlier attempts at giving up something for Lent were usually less than noteworthy. My heart was not in them. More recently, I have grown to understand that Lent is a time for inward reflection in preparation for Easter. I look forward to incorporating more contemplative daily prayer and reflection.

This is my 43rd year as a member of MCC. The current MCCDC Lenten worship series that explores more extensively the events of Holy Week, is speaking to me more than any Lenten season I have ever experienced at an MCC. This year, I feel totally immersed in the events of the Passion of Jesus.

In Jerusalem on that day I would not have been a palm waver or shouter but one who helped organize the parade in some way. My joy would have been inward, but no less spiritually intense.

So, join me in extending our appreciation to Rev. Dwayne and Rev. Cathy for orchestrating this year's wonderful Lenten journey for us; and to Rev. Dr. Robin for again encouraging us to express our journeys through the power of the written word.