

Devotion, Week of May 26, 2024

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

Preachers have a hard time sometimes coming up with an innovative sermon, especially if they've preached through Lectionary Years A, B, and C a couple of times. Those scripture readings don't change, so it sometimes is hard to think of something new. I am very lucky. I have an editor – and he happens to be my husband. Every week when I write a sermon, I hand it off to him for a critique. And Jim's really good at it. As a former manager of federal programs, he's used to reading federal regulations and all kinds of minutiae, and cutting to the chase, so to speak. So when he reads one of my sermons and doesn't understand something, he lets me know. His mantra is, "If I don't get it, the congregation won't get it." This gives me an opportunity to sit down and discuss the scripture readings, my sermon topic, and what I'm trying to say. All preachers should have an editor, in my opinion. Jim is a God-sent gift to my ministry, and his suggestions always make my sermons better.

This past Sunday I preached on the Trinity – one of my least favorite topics. In fact, it is such a thorny issue that most of the commentaries I read for Trinity Sunday didn't even really get into the Trinity! They addressed Paul speaking of the spirit, but not the bigger issue of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So I went to Shirley Guthrie's famous book, "Christian Doctrine," where he has a whole chapter about this. It was SOME help, but not enough. I finally went to our confessions, and just read what we've had to say as Presbyterians over the years about the Trinity. And then I handed the sermon over to Jim and told him this was not an easy topic. Sure enough – he had some issue. So hopefully, my revisions helped you understand this concept a little better.

In life, we all need an editor – someone to help us when we're stuck on something we had to speak or write about – to give us good feedback. I hope you have one. Bouncing off ideas always seems to work better than going it alone. That's why in the Presbyterian church, we have committees!!

Jeanne