

## Rev. Nancy Wakely - August 9th, 2015

The word “bread” has so many meanings for us and it is a word that brings back memories of events and occasions in our lives.

When I was a kid, there were two kinds of bread. White bread and light bread. White bread was that soft, almost weightless stuff you could buy at the grocery store. It went best with a thick slab of garlic bologna slathered with Miracle Whip. This wondrous concoction was made even better with a Grapette soda on the side. The bread and wine of my generation.

Then there was light bread. Every Sunday morning my grammaw would get up before dawn while the chickens were still sleepy and kill, clean, and de-feather 6 to 8 hens, depending on their size and put them in saltwater to brine them. Then she would start on the light bread which would rise while we all went to church. It was practically an “article of religion” in my family that we come together every Sunday and woe be to those who did not show up and observe the ritual properly, for they might be personally responsible for the breakdown of the family.

We walk to this altar rail every week in this community of faith—side by side and shoulder to shoulder. We receive a piece of unleavened bread that represents to us not just the body of Jesus but what that body, what His life calls us to be. He taught us to love one another and to be in community. But I believe He meant for us to go beyond that. He calls us not into ritual and creed and religion... but into faith and into trust. A faith that can move mountains, give sight to the blind, and heal the lame. A type of trust that moves us beyond inherited beliefs, traditions, and theologies...that does not bind us to this place and this time but rather sets us free to go unfettered into the world. A faith and trust that expands like leavening us and grows us as we minister to those who need the good news and need for us to act on the good news.

Recently, I came upon an excerpt from a book by the Episcopal priest Robert Capon called *The Astonished Heart*. He talks about the concern today over the plight of the Christian religion and the problems of the institutional church and proposes that we need to stop acting as if we're either a religion or an institution. He goes on to say that we use forms of religion because we as humans feel that the church is the sign to the world of God's accomplishment of what religion has tried, and sometimes failed to do.

In my mind, we as individuals have perhaps taken the body of Christ into our hands and sometimes failed to go anywhere with it. We put it into our mouths, chew, swallow, and we're done. Out of sight, out of mind. The traditions and rituals of the church are a comfort to many of us but the good news does not end here with the liturgy.

When we hold that once broken body in our hands, we have to have faith and trust that Jesus meant for us to be more than institution or a religion. That he meant more than for us call ourselves Christians and not be the people of the way. To give life to Him for others through our lives by being transformed by the bread of life. We, each one of us, is a child of God and we, each in our own way has a ministry to those who are broken. We have to trust Jesus and in turn trust ourselves that we can be the yeast or the leavening that takes that out into the world and not let the good news become dry ink, empty words, and institutions. Take that bread and through your life, stir it up, knead it, and let it rise so that he lives through you. Raise Him up, not just on the last day, but now.