

Healthy traditions celebrate our journey

Children are traditionalists. Doing anything twice makes it a ritual for them. Just stop off for ice cream on the way home from a Cub Scout pack parents' night, and a year later the kids will tell you, "But we always go to Baskin-Robbins after parents' night at Cub Scouts!"

Yet tradition is more than a repetition of events. It is a deliberate memory — remembering events and the human connections between events in a special way. When a memory helps me know who I am, where I have come from, and where I want to go, then that memory is elevated to tradition.

SOME TRADITIONS — much older than stopping at Baskin-Robbins — are entrusted to us to keep alive from generation to generation by remembering them. The fourth commandment of the Law of Moses created a Sabbath tradition. Israel shall keep the Sabbath, God commanded. They shall remember that he made the earth well and that he rested on the seventh day, and they shall remember that by surprise God redeemed their fathers and mothers from the bondage of slavery.

The Eucharist is a tradition, too. We remember the costly love of Jesus Christ and his victory over death until he comes again. The Lord's Supper helps us to know who we are, where we have come from, and where we ought to go; it connects us to other people, too, as they remember the same costly love.

The traditions of Christmas spring out of the love of God. We who celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord remember God's kindly act of Incarnation. As we build up around that core reality our own unique individual and family tradi-



From Your Minister
Earl F. Palmer

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TRADITION REMEMBERS the whole story that makes us who we are, from the root systems of our origins to the family tree from which our own branch grows. When we read the story of our person-hood thorough our understanding of the goodness and faithfulness of God, the traditions that have both the bitter and the sweet in them become good building blocks, because they are boundaried by the grace of God. We choose our traditions as we either keep them or forget them; and the

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BAD TRADITIONS, like the wrathful justification of mayhem and murder between the Capulets and Montagues in Shakespeare's *Romeo And Juliet*, are wrong and harmful, even though they make for thrilling stories. They are evil traditions because they do not include resolution by God's grace; instead they are fires of hatred stirred up and glorified by each generation. We need to discipline our traditions, therefore, to remember them according to new life brought by God's kingly reign.

We are the better off for celebrating our journey. We need to tell and retell the experiences that have shown us who we really are. I think the big surprise for each one of us will come when God meets us after our last meeting on earth and announces to the whole gang in the car, "Let's stop for ice cream on the way home. We always do. It's a tradition."

On behalf of Shirley and our family, I would like to thank you for your loving and caring support following the death of my mother, Myrtle Elizabeth Palmer, in late September. During my father's recent stay with us, he read every single card and found great comfort in your condolences.