



Sharing the Good News!

Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

Oh to be a Child Again!

by Alan C. Miller, Conference Minister

Have you ever heard the phrase: *The older I get, the more I realize how much I don't know!* Well the older I get, the more I am appreciating the wisdom behind that phrase, both rationally and spiritually.

Rationally, this high tech age constantly confronts us with how little we really know about creation. Last week while attending meetings in Cleveland, I spent some after-hours time with an old friend of mine and our Conference. Steve Gray is the Conference Minister for the Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ and during the 1980s was the Associate Conference Minister for Stewardship for the Penn Northeast Conference. Steve is hoping to retire in two years. I asked him if he had any plans for what he was going to do in retirement. Excitedly he said: "We are planning to move to Maine and live in a small condo next to a college. I want my days to be free so I can take courses at the college and go to the college library and read. There are still so many things that I would like to learn about."

Recently I have been thinking about aging and spirituality. In talking with my Spiritual Director I told her I want to rediscover a child-like faith. Children are wonderful (so wonderful that I have been actively campaigning with my children for grandchildren). Children are honest; they are inquisitive and imaginative; they laugh when they feel like laughing and they cry when they feel like crying. They are not bound by all of the restrictions that adults put on life, such as *when is it proper to laugh and when is it proper to cry*. They listen more with their hearts than with their heads, and they are not preoccupied with figuring everything out and putting everything in its proper place.

I once heard a wonderful story about children and faith. A young couple had just come home from the hospital with their second child, a baby girl. Anxiously waiting at home was her 4 year old brother. That evening when it was time to put the baby to bed, the 4 year old told his parents that he wanted to go into the baby's room and say goodnight to his new sister – all by himself. The parents wanted to do everything they could to encourage the relationship between the 4 year old and his new sister, but they were also worried about his motives. So they let the 4 year old go to see his sister all by himself, but they kept the bedroom door open just enough so that they could keep their eyes on this first visit. The 4 year old walked over to the crib, pressed his face between the slats, and said to the baby: "Please tell me about God, I'm starting to forget."

Could it be that in the childhood innocence of our birth we already knew about God and it is the experience of this rational, proper, adult world that makes us forget? H'mm – maybe that is what Jesus meant when he said: *Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.* (Mark 10:15)

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