

MIDWEEK MISSIVE – 04/13/18

In his 42 years as the radio voice of the Detroit Tigers, Ernie Harwell, started every opening day game the same way: by quoting scripture, in particular, the Song of Solomon.

**Here, the winter is past;
the rains have come and gone.
Blossoms have appeared in the land;
the season of singing has arrived,
and the sound of the turtledove is heard in our land.
The green fruit is on the fig tree,
and the grapevines in bloom are fragrant.**

It was Mr. Harwell's way of sharing his faith and his love of baseball. No big fanfare, just his distinctive southern drawl letting us know that winter was over and baseball was back! Mr. Harwell passed away a few years ago, and when I heard the news, I will admit to crying. He and I had shared many years of baseball games, many late nights when the Tigers were on the West Coast, and I felt like I had lost a friend when he died.

But every year, on opening day, I go back to scripture to remember his reminding us to lean boldly into the future, to breathe deep the promise of spring, and to know, once again, that THIS year, is the Tigers year.

I feel that way about Easter and spring in the church, too. Winters can be long and we can slowly slide into inactivity. On a cold Sunday morning or a snowy Saturday evening, the pull of a warm home is strong. But as the sun starts to shine a bit warmer, and the greenery and flowers start to bloom, the church comes alive, too. After the glorious remembrance of the resurrection of Jesus, we in the church turn to our own renewal. Things come alive again, and at Candleberry Chapel, the plans for the Spring Fair are in full swing. (If you have not signed up to help, check the signup sheet on the back bulletin board of the chapel.)

And this year, our renewal includes taking a good look at who we are and how we can continue to thrive moving forward. Our two congregational meetings last weekend helped crystalize some of the work to be done, and in the coming weeks, you will hear more about the steps we will take to begin our active search for a new settled pastor. Some of it is organizational, like setting up teams to coordinate church beautification efforts, Chapel maintenance issues, and community service activities. Some of it is looking at our worship and making it even better. Some of it has to do with how to let the people in our community know who we are and to let them know we are a welcoming community. Some of it has to do with simply giving ourselves more opportunities to be in fellowship and service with each other. All of it is achievable, and I look forward to working together to celebrate Spring with a renewal of our own!

One last Ernie Harwell story: several years ago, while waiting for a flight out of Detroit, Carolynn and I had a chance encounter with the Governor of Michigan, someone I had some minor contact with in the past, and then, Ernie Harwell, the voice of the Tigers. I have no idea how my conversation with the Governor went, but I remember my conversation with Mr. Harwell vividly. I introduced myself, said I had spent many a night listening to him on my transistor radio, how he had made baseball come alive for me, and basically gushed all over him. He smiled, asked what I did for a living, where I grew up, said something that made me understand he knew where my neighborhood in Detroit was, and thanked me for being a loyal fan. As we parted, he shook my hand, and said, "Good luck with the teaching Brad, Lord knows we need good teachers."

As he walked away, Carolynn said, "Wow...the Governor and Ernie Harwell in one day." I replied, "Who cares about the Governor? Ernie Harwell just called me by name!"

Spring is the time that all things are renewed: flowers bloom, birds make their beautiful music, there's another baseball season to be played, and we, Christ's church, renew our commitment to being the people God would have us be. In short, spring means that we are called to be witnesses and to the possibilities of the resurrection life...and now is the time, and this is the place!

Be peaceful,
Rev. Brad

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"Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words." - Francis of Assisi