

Memorial Communion Sunday

Our Glorious Inheritance by Patty Friesen

Ephesians 1:15-23

November could be called Remembrance Month. We have Remembrance Day on the 11th and in our Mennonite Churches, Memorial Sunday this last Sunday before Advent. It feels like a lot of death for one month but I like November for the quiet slow dying of creation and the reflection on our mortality this season invites. Death was such a friend to us at the Mennonite Nursing Home and I always thought after I was finished there that I'd work for Brian Funk at Funk's Funeral Home. I like that we have our church cemetery that we can see out the windows of the back door. Our dead rest among us and I look at them each time I drive into the church parking lot to see how they are doing.

Many of our rural churches have cemeteries beside the church where the funeral flows from sanctuary as relatives carry their loved out from the congregation to their final resting place. There is something powerfully healing in those physical movements of carrying a casket and following behind and standing by the graveside as it is lowered into the earth. Our urban churches don't have cemeteries attached so the person who died is buried far away at Hillcrest or

Woodlawn by family before the service and we as church members never actually get to see them or physically say good-bye.

Brian Funk says we are doing funerals differently these days. Churches are less involved with funerals. The present generation may not be connected to church and we often live at distance from our parents and grandparents. When death comes, we don't know what to do and we tend to have private family affairs and with cremation, we can hold off on a memorial service until everyone can come from a distance. Thomas Long and Thomas Lynch in *The Good Death* call the church to reclaim our glorious inheritance in how we do death. As a church we not only remember individuals and what they meant to us, but we have a broader view of death as our communal journey toward God that we proclaim through scripture and music and preaching. Death is bigger than individuals and as the church we hold the words of comfort and healing in the midst of death.

The Apostle Paul speaks of the communion of saints – meaning that all who have died before us and we who are still living, are companions in Christ. We have been made one through our faith and our walk with Christ and we anticipate the day when we are joined with our loved ones in death. Death ends a life but it

doesn't end our relationship with our loved ones who have died. They live on in our memory and their influence.

Today we remember our loved ones who have passed this year. Through communion, we remember Christ who died creating our glorious inheritance and the ongoing communion of saints. We may come down the center aisles and light a candle in their memory or come to receive the bread from the deacons and dip it in the common cup in memory of what Christ has done for us. Adeline and I will be at the children's plate with crackers and grapes. I invite the deacon servers forward.