

**Small Talk – April 14 2021**  
**Required Facial Covering When in Public – Day 264**  
**By Michael Small**

Yesterday, while gathering on Zoom with UCC Clergy in Minnesota it was well worth noting that the conversation was dominated by the struggles of the on-going pandemic, the events occurring in the Twin Cities, and the challenges of being in ministry “for such a time as this”<sup>1</sup>. It was a good, helpful, and there was much supportive conversation. This weekly Zoom has been a great opportunity for getting to know one another and for being one manifestation of “church”.

While in the middle of checking in there were tears, frustration, and strategy for survival in the midst of hard times. One participant was rather upbeat, speaking about an upcoming vacation. Last Sunday she opened her sermon by asking those present “What do you call a bear who has no teeth? . . . well, of course, a gummy bear!”

In dark and hard times, we are reminded that sometimes, though love must prevail, there are moments when we find the light revealed in a simple bit of humor. Do you think that yesterday’s newly fallen snow was a bit of a joke for those of us who were thinking spring is finally here! (though it is).

All of us can remember the times when with friends or family we were gathered and someone starts laughing at an event, a joke, themselves, or a story? The laughter becomes contagious, conversation stops, tears run down cheeks, and the laughter comes from deep down in your belly. It’s not logical – far from it. We can’t talk – there is only laughter. Remember the feelings after such a time. There is a lightness, smiles, and joy.

Occasionally, on YouTube, a video will pop-up of the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson, Ed McMahon, and the band led by the sometimes, flamboyant Carl Hilding “Doc” Severinsen. The particular segment that popped up was Johnny, Ed, Jonathan Winters, and Robin Williams. As I watched, for eighteen plus minutes of chaos, I was flooded with the many memories the Tonight Show brought to my family, and I openly and deeply laughed. People making fun of themselves and being spontaneously playful with each other.

In the year 1659 these words were recorded “*All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy!*” (forgive the exclusive language) Also, it is written “[*there is*] a season to cry and a season to laugh; a season to mourn and a season to dance.”<sup>2</sup>

Laughter, dance – often both cut through the things that weigh us down. Back in the day, on the first night of a Senior High Camp (80-100 senior high folk who did not know

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<sup>1</sup> Esther 4:14

<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:4 from *Priests for Equality. The Inclusive Bible*. Sheed & Ward. Kindle Edition.

each other) the first activity of the first night (after developing covenantal rules to live by for the week) we would be led in a square dance – all were required to participate. After the dance, we knew each other in different ways, we laughed, we let down some of our personas, and we became a new community.

It is not accidental, when going to the YouTube Channel of *Community Church of Walker United Church of Christ*, by far the most watched event is a two-hour virtual concert *Tidings of Comfort and Joy* (1,156 hits as of this morning). Why – it is about music, it is about joy, it is about entertainment, and it is about seeing familiar and new faces.

Today, in the very middle of life as it is, find time to laugh, perhaps dance, and in gratitude find deep within you joy and wonder.

*“Rejoice always, pray constantly, and give thanks for everything—”*<sup>3</sup>

In the spirit and agape love of Jesus, Michael

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18a *Priests for Equality. The Inclusive Bible*. Sheed & Ward. Kindle Edition.