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“Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn” – Luke 2:7

Poop on the Pews

Dear friend:

One of the first acts of kindness, we learn as Christians, is that an innkeeper, whose hotel was totally booked, told Jesus’ parents they could spend the night in the stable. That’s not ever happened to Trish or I. If the hotel is full, we’re told, in future, we might consider a reservation. Perhaps the innkeeper’s kindness set the stage for a history of kindness.

But Christians have not always been that kindly. That’s always seemed strange – that an organization, built on love, could erupt in unkindness.

Did we learn unkindness from Jesus? One day, when Jesus came upon some church people in the synagogue, selling pigeons and lambs to be sacrificed, he was so incensed that he drove them out with a whip (John 2:15). Tables got overturned; animals and birds were scattered. No doubt, feathers and poop were everywhere, even on the pews. The synagogue’s Property Team must have been some upset. If Jesus had thought about this, rather than losing his cool, he might have considered an alternative action. Perhaps, this wasn’t one of his best days.

By the time this story was written by John, after the year 131, Jesus was considered to be fully human as well as fully divine. That’s the reason, of all the stories about Jesus, those found in the Gospel of John resonate, most closely, to our modern thinking. The fully divine part would have meant Jesus’ tantrum in the synagogue was divinely inspired. The fully human part meant, somedays ... he was just like us.

This past year, we’ve had that same sort of losing one’s cool, erupt in our Community of Faith. Some have sent hurtful emails, gossiped, accused, yelled. We’ve put this down to deeply held views. Jesus had a deeply held view that those who were selling the pigeons and lambs, were selling them for a big profit, and using the synagogue to mask their profiteering.

What are our reasons for unkindness? I know it’s not meanness. For us, this is serious stuff because we’ve created an anti-harassment policy. We customized it from the ones written by the United Church of Canada and Ontario’s Occupational Health and Safety Act. Making it our own, indicates we take this seriously. It’s posted in the office hallway. It’s there for each of us to read.

Unkindness in us, as individuals, seems like brokenness. Something is broken when it’s not working right, like an arm or a hip. Unkindness is kindness broken. On that day, Jesus might have been broken. But the real heart of this story ... is that he recovered!

In this past year, if we’ve found ourselves individually broken ... like Jesus ... we can recover too.

Much love to you and your whole family.

Until next time. [Peter Challen](#)

*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*

