

"It takes a long time to become young." (Pablo Picasso)

When my daughter was seventeen I heard her tell her friends she was eighteen. When they left I said, "Why did you tell them that, you're only seventeen." "No Dad, I'm eighteen, I'll show you my driver's license." And she proceeded to do so! How many teenagers have fake identification making them older than they really are?

We play dress-up, we say we're almost sixteen when we're only fourteen and a half. We play act the roles of important adults in our lives. We tell our parents, 'you're treating me like a baby,' hoping they'll treat us as adults before we really are. My granddaughter, who is three talks about "when I'm five, I'm gonna...."

Pablo Picasso, who worked at his art to a 'ripe old age,' knew what he was talking about. *"It takes a long time to become young."* It takes a long time to become comfortable with who we are, a long time to become peaceful within, to accept on faith that life (and all its ups and downs) can be trusted to God. Jesus' admonition to become as children called his followers to this kind of youthfulness. Yet, we spend a large part of our childhood wanting to be older.

Only when we enter the older adult category do we begin to look back to younger days with longing. But we do so with a proviso! "If only I knew then what I know now!" The older adult carries a sense of history within, history that might have made things turn out differently if "I knew then what I know now." An older adult cannot literally return to childhood or younger years; no one can! She can however look back and see the past from a new perspective. In many retirement homes, assisted living centers, nursing homes and such there are life review programs. Through life story telling, journaling and such, older adults are encouraged to review their lives. They are encouraged to discover that their story is incomplete. They begin to see they still have a present and a future and that they have learned valuable lessons along the way, most especially that life can (must) be trusted to God. These lessons will help them deal with the present as it unfolds. It's a fascinating endeavor in which the United Methodist Homes (where I do my ministry) is actively participating.

I see lives changed as hope is renewed and the older adult grabs hold of the reality that life is not over. How often I am asked to visit our churches to talk about older adult ministries and find myself wishing they would pay more attention to life review. Instead of bemoaning the older adult's tendency to dwell in the past, how much more productive it would be to encourage revisiting the past, relearning its lessons and applying them in the present. Even when they are unaware of the fact, older adults have learned to move on, have learned they have been given resources to cope with life's changes. They have learned lessons people of every age would do well to learn. They are a valuable resource and we would serve them and ourselves better if we found ways to let them share their life's lessons.

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