
We Laughed

*Are there several ways to abbreviate Maine?
Or is it just me.*



We go to Maine in July.

For the last fifteen years or so, I have served an Episcopal summer chapel called the Church of All Saints by-the-Sea for two weeks during July. All Saints is located on the beautiful island of Southport in the Boothbay, Maine region. We rent a little cottage for the month and, over the years, have developed a pattern for our time there

We always make a pilgrimage to the L.L. Bean Flagship Campus in Freeport at the beginning of the month and invariably spend several nights on an offshore island in the Gulf of Maine around the middle of the month. Robert goes to sailing camp every weekday morning and plays kickball on Wednesday nights. I have a coffee shop that I like to visit and a local wharf where they serve seafood that is perfect for lunch after church on Sunday. Mary Hunter has her favorite roadside stand for “fresh from trap to table” lobster rolls (on toasted gluten free buns no less) and a shop that serves old-fashioned, hard ice cream. And, of course, we have our church friendships that we take time to renew each year.

This year, I noticed something that I hadn’t really paid attention to before. We laughed ... a lot. I have a particular memory that makes me smile every time I turn to it. We were in the car coming back from a geocaching adventure (or maybe it was an ice cream run). I don’t remember what triggered it. I just remember the burst of laughter. Robert said something. I responded. Mary Hunter joined in. And, then we were all laughing uncontrollably.

The poet, Maya Angelou, once said, “People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

What strikes me about my memory of this moment is how full of joy I felt.

I don’t remember any defensiveness. I don’t remember any effort to control the outcome. I don’t remember anyone winning or losing in the exchange.

I do remember taking delight in the moment. I do remember giving myself over to it. I do remember being filled with a sense of gratitude when it was over.

I realize that the pattern of our time in Maine generates ideal conditions for a joy-filled moment like my memory. I wonder, though, what it might be like to intentionally create more space for such a moment in my day-to-day life now that I'm back home in Atlanta. After all, the joy I remember is not just a fleeting feeling. It's a consequence of drawing closer to God. The closer we come to God, the more we can hear and feel God's laughter.

I also wonder what it might be like for us all to intentionally create more space for similar moments of joy, humor, and laughter. As James Martin notes in his book, *Between Heaven and Mirth* (2011), joy, humor and laughter are at the heart of the spiritual life. Good humor fosters sacred community. And, as Martin notes, joy is not something that is simply "found." It is an outgrowth of vocation, service, and love.

What would it be like if when people asked us about our time together at the Cathedral, our answer started with "We laughed!"