

Roots from Good Seeds

*Oh in the woods there was a tree
The prettiest tree
You ever did see
And the tree was in the ground
And the green grass grew all around, all around, and the green grass
grew all around*

For years elementary school teachers and recreational leaders taught young children all kinds of songs. Most parents did not do this until the advent of VCRs, DVDs, and finally the Internet. This has allowed families to hear songs in the house, in the car, on headphones, and in ear pods. However, teachers still do things with songs to get children to clean up, learn rhyming words, math facts, body parts, and even the Ten Commandments. Sometimes the songs become earworms. I remember the song “And the Green Grass Grew All Around” as a song about a tree that sprouted from its roots.

We all have our roots. These were established for our family of origin or from our adopted family. Some families can stay in one place while others move around due to a variety of circumstances. My parents

bought the house where I grew up in 1960. We sold it in 1998 after both of my parents had passed. In those thirty-eight years, they certainly had established roots. Except for a time in the Navy, my father never left the Morningside neighborhood in Pittsfield. He spent his life in four different residences in a six-block area. Our family roots were clearly established at 66 Curtis Terrace.

*And on that tree
There was a limb
The prettiest limb
That you ever did see
And the limb was on the tree
And the tree in the ground
And the green grass grew all around, all around, and the green grass
grew all around*

It was also in the Morningside area that my own religious roots were established. I spent a lot of time at St. Mary the Morningstar church and school. It was instilled in me that of course, I would be in church every weekend and become a part of the church community, even as a teen. I was in the choir, served as the teen rep on the Parish Council, and helped with Faith Formation classes. In conversations with people in both churches, I know that many of you were raised the same

way. Clearly, your religious roots were established. Even if you took some time off from church somewhere in your life—even I did that but at a later time than most—you find your way back because the roots don't let you go too far from where they've been planted.

It came as a surprise to me that I found it difficult to establish my own roots. In my search for what God wanted from me, I found that I lived in fourteen different places in a 17-year period. I finally felt settled when we bought the house in Springfield; we will have been there for 18 years in November. As far as religious roots, I left my Catholic ones, well most of them, behind as I investigated the Metropolitan Community Church and the Congregational (UCC) church where I eventually found my home. I look to my religious roots as my Christian roots as many of the same things have happened.

*And on that limb
There was a branch
The prettiest branch
That you ever did see
And the branch was on the limb,
And the limb was on the tree,
And the tree was in the ground
And the green grass grew all around, all around, and the green grass
grew all around*

There are some people in our congregations who grew up at either First Church or Southwick Congregational. They have great memories of how church was, the opportunities afforded them, and how some even met their spouses here. Over the past 18 months (It has truly been that long) I have been able to sit in my office or at coffee hour and have been the beneficiary of their stories. I love to hear these stories as they allow me to become more steeped in the traditions and histories of the churches. The fact that you pay homage to your history is important; it allows all of us to learn about our roots and what made us what we are today. Your history serves as the root of your religious upbringing.

Roots are good—it is what stems from the roots that is important. Let's go back to the song "And the Green Grass Grew All Around." Much like the seed that fell into the fertile ground and took root, the tree in the wood also came from seeds like those that Jesus talked about. What grew from the seeds? Roots, a trunk, limbs, branches, leaves, and then perhaps a nest, and then an egg holding a bird gave new life.

Sometimes, our roots do not take hold in fertile ground. We may have watered them, cared for them, added the right fertilizer, etc., and

they still don't necessarily grow. Other times, they may grow, but they don't look like what we thought they might look like. As we have sprouted limbs and branches, things tend to settle on them and give life to things that we never dreamed could happen.

*And on that branch
There was a nest
The prettiest nest
That you ever did see
And the nest was on the branch
And the branch was on the limb
And the limb was on the tree
And the tree was in the ground
And the green grass grew all around, all around, and the green grass
grew all around*

Look at all of the things that have happened simply because we have planted some seeds on fertile ground, established roots, brought forth life, and nurtured growth. Has anyone ever given you a plant that had already been started? I get them all the time, brown thumbs and all. However, I have many gardeners and "green thumb" folks in my life. But we do what we can to nurture the plant, let the roots take hold of fertile soil, and then see what springs forth. Sometimes, we are called to

nurture things that we never dreamed that we'd be called to do. Will we meet with success?

As we are in the middle of July, let us take time this summer to tend to our roots, mains, limbs, and branches. Let's make sure that we have enough physical and spiritual water to exist, thrive, and continue to grow. Regardless of our age, we still have fruit that we can produce, fruit of all kinds, that can be used to nourish ourselves and others.

*And in that nest
There was an egg
The prettiest egg
That you ever did see
And the egg was in the nest
And the nest was on the branch
And the branch was on the limb
And the limb was on the tree
And the tree was in the ground
And the green grass grew all around, all around, and the green grass
grew all around.*

Amen!