

Ramblings from The Village Idiot

Groundhog day (February 2, also celebrated as Candlemas) marks the halfway point between the Winter solstice and the Spring equinox in the Northern Hemisphere.

The gain in daylight in the morning has become noticeable. We're gaining a total of over 3 minutes a day, with the gain increasing each day.

Buds are swelling on maples. More and more birds are returning. They know Spring is just around the corner. And before the winter storm hit on January 24, my snow drops and the odd narcissus were just starting to poke above the ground. Hopefully, the blanket of snow will have protected them from the worst of the cold.

But with unusually cold weather expected to persist through Valentine's Day, it might be a while before I know how they fared.

After clearing the snow from my driveway and pavement in the arctic cold, I avoided cabin fever by doing some strategic snow clearing further afield. To avoid snow blindness, I wore polarized "wear over" sunglasses.

Because the weather had turned really cold before the storm, the snow hadn't bonded to the pavement. It was possible to chop through snow banks by the road and toss large chunks aside. The stuff was as almost as lightweight as styrofoam. It was easy to scrape down to bare pavement.

At first, the intense cold had made my hands and feet hurt despite mittens, heavy socks, and boots. But it was possible to sustain the effort long enough that my hands and feet actually started feeling warm, encouraging me to keep it up.

The next morning, my muscles would be a bit stiff and achy, but - thankfully - nothing worse. And a bit more use of those muscles eased those aches and pains.

Finally, the forecast indicat-

ed less-dreadful temperatures in the offing. But the weather has become less predictable in recent times, so I took action.

I made a favorite comfort food - macaroni and cheese. Not the kind that comes in a box, but the real stuff. Making a white sauce and mixing in real shredded cheese is a little trickier and takes a bit longer than using yellow powder or a "processed cheese product." But to me, the result is worth it.

The macaroni and cheese sealed the deal. I felt warmer with the first bite. And then, as predicted, the late-January cold wave finally relented. Overnight lows in the teens and 20's above zero seemed balmy compared to double digits below. Daytime highs near freezing seemed like a heat wave compared to highs in the single digits and teens.

I can now stay outside long enough for a decent stretch of the legs without risking frostbite. It will be a while yet before I can go on really long walks, though. I have had to make do with retracing my steps over shorter routes. The problem is snow-packed and icy pavement. I have to be careful about falling. When it's really cold, packed snow is stiff, crunchy, and safe to walk on. But as temperatures rise, the packed snow begins to melt, and becomes underlaid by ice. The packed snow begins to disintegrate, and becomes very slippery.

I have heard that aboriginal peoples of polar regions (FKA "Eskimos") have a hundred different words for snow. Observing how the condition of fallen snow changes over days and weeks, I can easily believe it. As Spring approaches, I can also believe that folks living in Illinois might have a hundred different words for mud. But most of these words are probably generic terms indicating undesirability, and would result in the editor spiking my column if I tried to put them in.

Pastor Stahl's Weekly Message of Faith



Hello, Everyone!

By the time you read this, all of you will know who won the Super Bowl. As I am writing this, it hasn't been played yet. LOL I'm sure it was a great game! What I do know is that at the end of the game, the Commissioner of the NFL gave the winning team the Super Bowl Trophy. It is known as the Lombardi Trophy, named after legendary coach Vince Lombardi. Lombardi coached the Green Bay Packers to 5 NFL Championships in the 1960's, as well as winning the first two Super Bowls, in 1967 and 1968. They are the last team to win the NFL Championship 3 years in a row. (1965, 1966, 1967) Since the Packers did that, no team has won the Super Bowl 3 years in a row. The Kansas City Chiefs attempted to do it last year, but were defeated in the Super Bowl by the Philadelphia Eagles.

Coach Lombardi was an excellent coach and a fantastic teacher not only of the game of football, but of life. He demanded that his players give 110% on and off the field. He would tell his players at the beginning of the season: "Gentlemen, we are going to chase perfection this season. We won't be able to reach it, nobody is perfect. But in the process of chasing perfection, we will achieve excellence."

Winning 5 NFL Championships is testament to that.

Here are some of Coach Lombardi's famous quotes: "Winning isn't everything, but wanting to win and succeed is."

Confidence is contagious. So is lack of confidence.

Fatigue makes cowards of us all.

If you won't settle for anything less than your best, you'll be amazed at what you can accomplish.

It's not whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get back up.

Once you learn to quit, it becomes a habit.

And my favorite: "You don't do things right once in a while, you do them right all the time."

Coach Lombardi died tragically at the young age of 57 from colon cancer. Men, get your colonoscopies! He never had one, and it cost him his life.

Our Lord Wants all of us to put in our best effort. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He Will Crown your efforts richly with success." (Proverbs 3:5,6) God Bless all of you!

Pastor Jeff Stahl
Countryside and Ogden United Methodist Churches



Psalm 104
New International Version
1 Praise the Lord, my soul.
Lord my God, you are very great;

2 you are clothed with splendor and majesty.
3 The Lord wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent

4 and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters.
5 He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind.

6 He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants.
7 He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved.

8 You covered it with the watery depths as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.
9 But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight;

10 8 they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them.
11 You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth.

12 He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains.
13 They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst.
14 The birds of the sky nest by the waters; they sing among the branches.

15 He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.
16 He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate—
bringing forth food from the earth:
17 15 wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts.

17 There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the junipers.
18 The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the crags are a refuge for the hyrax.
19 He made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down.

20 You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl.
21 The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God.
22 The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens.

23 Then people go out to their work, to their labor until evening.
24 How many are your works, Lord!
In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

25 There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number— living things both large and small.
26 There the ships go to and

Hook, Line and Sinker With Tony Hooker

We're Loyal to you, VG High

We're Old gold and blue, VG High

We'll back you to stand against the best in the land For we know you have sand, VG High

Last weekend, I had the pleasure and privilege of emceeing the annual PTO Glo Bingo fund raiser, and several things became readily apparent.

First, don't EVER play modern lyrics trivia with Lauren Wendling. I think I could hold my own in 80's music, but I would have no chance with songs recorded in the 21st century. The girl's a living juke box.

Second, and possibly related to my first point, VG teachers and parents know how to have a good time. There were faces painted with fluorescent daubers, the "world's longest" glow bracelet chain, photos with fire extinguishers (Don't ask. What happens at Glo bingo, STAYS at glo bingo!) and what appeared to be a five-course meal at one particular table near the front. As I roamed around the room, the smiles and genuine enjoyment in each other's company were apparent at every table.

Finally, and most importantly, I was struck once again by the dedication and support of staff and families for Villa Grove schools. I'm sure other towns have the same feeling of pride in their institutions, but since Villa Grove has been my only elementary or high school association since I started Kindergarten in 1968, it's the only one I can reference, and as always, I was amazed. The hall at the VFW was standing room only, as always. In fact, extra chairs had

to be drug in to accommodate the overflow crowds. No matter what the event, it seems like Villa Grove shows out in support, especially of our school. The city's businesses, who are hit up constantly for financial support by all sorts of community organizations, still found it within themselves to donate graciously. I know they get solicited, a lot, because I'm selling raffle tickets for the Sacred Heart fish fry in a couple of weeks, and many of the same businesses are listed as donors for that event. The symbiosis between the schools, churches and organizations and the town's businesses can't be overstated. We can't do it without each other, and local proprietors always seem to step up to the plate.

I'm told that over \$4000 was raised last Saturday, and for that, all involved should feel proud. I think that anything we can do to make teacher lives easier is worth the effort.

I don't have any data to back my assertion, but it seems like it's tougher to be a teacher or administrator now than it ever has been. I grew up in the days when every principal had a "board of education" hanging in their office, and it was amazing how the quickly the connection between backside and brain could be reached when necessary. Teachers and administrators face a maze of paperwork these days that I don't think existed back in the day. Sometimes I wonder if the simpler times of my youth weren't better times, but like disco (I sincerely hope!) they're not coming back. So, I tip my hat to those who have chosen to be educators. You have my respect and my support.

16 The trees of the Lord are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

17 There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the junipers.

18 The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the crags are a refuge for the hyrax.

19 He made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down.

20 You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl.

21 The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God.

22 The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens.

23 Then people go out to their work, to their labor until evening.

24 How many are your works, Lord!

In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

25 There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number— living things both large and small.

26 There the ships go to and

fro, and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.

27 All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.

28 When you give it to them, they gather it up;

when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.

29 When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.

30 When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.

31 May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works—

32 he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke.

33 I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

34 May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord.

35 But may sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more.

Praise the Lord, my soul.
Praise the Lord.

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Worship-9:00 a.m.
Nursery Available during worship
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Wednesday's Bible Study 1:30pm
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