



Poor Yeast

Yeast in the Time of Pandemic

A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. ~ Galatians 5:9

Meanwhile, when the crowd gathered by the thousands, so that they trampled on one another, he began to speak first to his disciples, "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, that is, their hypocrisy. 2 Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ~ Luke 12:1



Good Yeast

He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? 19 It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches." And again he said, "To what should I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." ~ Luke 13:18-21

Your boasting is not a good thing. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. ~1 Corinthians 5:6-8



I don't know how it is where you live, but in the United States, the "Stay-at-Home" response to the pandemic, created a flurry of bread-baking, of all things. For the first couple of months it was practically impossible to find either flour or yeast on the supermarket shelves.

Since the onset of the pandemic coincided with the beginning of retirement for me, I pondered this bread-baking thing. Years ago, before babies, child rearing and work interfered, I used to bake all of our bread, and I was intrigued enough with the "no yeast" predicament, that I seriously considered beginning to bake bread again, or at least when order was restored to the supermarket shelves.

Therefore, I instructed Phil, my husband, who was our designated grocery shopper, to keep his eyes open for yeast and to purchase some when he found it. Eventually we were the proud possessors of several packets of dry yeast just waiting to be used. My first venture back into bread baking went very well, and I have since baked a couple more loaves, striving to not go overboard and join in the bread-baking frenzy that was taking place in this country.

Then, last week, I entered the cleaning-out-cupboards phase of being home-bound, and I discovered packets of yeast in the darkened corners of the kitchen cupboards with dates as far back as 2012! After getting them out of the dark and moving them to a place where I could see them, they sat, silently condemning me for not having utilized them when they were fresh and viable. This week, I finally opened one of the packets from 2012, and poured it into a small bowl of warm water with a bit of sugar in it to see if it would proof. Not only did it grow vigorously and quickly, I then used it to make an exceptionally fine loaf of simple white bread.

I have been pondering yeast, and I invite you into this pondering.

Questions to Consider:

1. In the texts above, Jesus talks about good yeast and bad yeast. What is good yeast? What are its characteristics? What would bad yeast be like?
2. I thought my old yeast would be bad yeast. How does my discovery that even 8-year-old yeast could still be viable affect this wondering?
3. Finally, what does all of this have to do with DIAKONIA? How are diaconal folk like yeast? While our numbers seem to be shrinking, how do we find comfort in these texts? Do we? How are we leavened to the world in this time of pandemic? How do we live into this image of the small amount of yeast that will leaven the entire loaf? How do we bring nourishment, lightness and growth to our diaconal communities and to the world?

Prayer:

This month, we give thanks for: + the gift of Theodor & Katherine Fliedner, and all who provided the yeast for the "bread for the world" that is diakonia + our member communities and our ecumenical relationships. + the Executive Committee of DIAKONIA World Federation + the ability to grant COVID 19 Aid to member communities in this specific time of pandemic + All who work to bring this virus under control.

We pray for: + continued health and wholeness for our world + those who are suffering from this virus + those who are on the front lines in this battle + a vaccine that will be safe and effective + the leaders and governments of the world + all nations in times of political transition.

Holy One, we are mindful of the wonders of leaven. Help us to be the leaven in the places where we serve. May we bring light, life and nourishment into this world. May we be your servants. In Christ's Name. Amen.