

Have Times Really Changed?

How did you get to church today? Did you come in a car, horse, or camel? I cannot imagine that any of you would choose to travel by camel or horse. It is all they had in the time of Abram/Abraham and Sarai/Sarah. Travel was slow and it seemed that life went by at a snail's pace. There was no way to tell time except for where the sun was that day. When the sun rose, it was time to get up. Perhaps when the sun was at its highest and strongest, there would be a meal and time to rest. As the sun set it could have been time for a final meal and then to go to sleep for another day.

Days turned into years and the modes of transportation changed. Horses were able to be used as people moved from desert areas to discover places for farming, etc. Chariots and other carriages allowed for transportation to be improved, but you had to have money for that. People were able to keep time a bit better through sundials. By the 13th century, rudimentary mechanical clocks came into being. While keeping

time improved so did modes of transportation. People could get from place to place on horseback, carriage, or boat.

Now, lest this become a lesson on keeping time while getting places, let's take a look at where we are in Southwick. This town was established, as we know, in 1770. Think about what was going on in this town over 250 years ago. People traveled by horseback and carriage; they may have had a small boat that they used to fish, and we know that eventually became a tourist destination. There may have been a family or two who owned slaves, but thankfully that practice was abolished in Massachusetts by 1780. The town history even mentions that Southwick families played a prominent role in hiding slaves as they sought to escape to Canada.

We know that Southwick has continued to grow and has grown into the town we know today. For over 50 years, this town has maintained its own high school and has modern buildings that offer a first-rate education. Southwick has emerged as a nice place to live and a nice place to raise a family. Lately, though, it seems that may have

changed, at least on a small scale that has blown up to very large proportions.

As details emerge from Southwick Regional School, many of us have been negatively amazed that such things would happen in this area in 2024. The allegations of racist bullying, taunting, and humiliation of young people of color have come to light. We can't quite put a grade to it, so we don't know if it stems from the middle school or high school. Regardless, I hope that this church's people are outraged.

Every Sunday, I stand up and say "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here." It appears in our bulletin every week. If we truly believe this, then we should be very upset that anything like this has taken place in our schools. Our Scripture tells that we are made in God's image. All kinds of people are made in God's image. This is regardless of skin color, sexual orientation, age, disabilities, or anything else that sets people apart from "normal."

Racism and bigotry are things that are taught. They are not now, nor have they ever been, Christian values. It is NEVER ok to practice racism or bigotry. None of us have the authority to judge what is the

standard or what is normal, except to treat everyone with the dignity that is theirs and was given to us by God. We are called to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, soul, and mind; we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus taught us that EVERYONE is our neighbor.

In today's Gospel, Jesus said, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." Let us be true followers of Jesus; we must serve as example setters in that this type of behavior is NOT ok, is it NOT allowed, and it is NOT tolerated. We are ALL made in God's image. As we keep time, hopefully this dark time in our town's history will pass quickly. Amen!