

# The Crossnore Chronicle

Winter – Volume 2016 Issue 1 – Winter

The Communication Team of Crossnore Presbyterian Church publishes the Crossnore Chronicle quarterly: Editors Betty Redman France, Fred France. The deadline for articles is the last Sunday of March, June, September and December. Email Betty France at [frdnbty@charter.net](mailto:frdnbty@charter.net), call her at 828-387-2197 or drop off articles at the church.



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## Pastor's Minute

Dear Church Family,

It is supposed to be winter in the North Carolina Mountains but we have yet to see more than an few inches of snow – of course this could change rapidly. Our winter congregation has moved from the sanctuary to our cozy fellowship hall to share in worship and enjoy weekly fellowship.

### Farewell to the old and hello to the new

Our new class of elders was ordained and installed on Sunday, January 3rd. We are excited to have Linda Berkley, Charlotte Davila and Mimi Sloop joining our Session. We also honored the elders who have completed their terms and will be looking for new ways God is calling them to serve in our congregation. We are so grateful for the good leadership that Zack Allen, Heather Jordan, and Clarence Kenyon have provided. So, as we walk forward into 2016 and into God's future for our church and community, our Session will be looking at better ways to communicate with our church family, new ways to share the good news of what God is doing in and through our church and fresh ideas for involving members and friends in fellowship, ministry, and mission.

This winter I will be spending part of my quiet time reflecting on seven years of being your pastor and listening to the Spirit's leading as we go forward in faith together. Maybe that is what the spiritual winter season is about—taking time to reflect, to listen, to prepare, to learn, and to be ready to the new ways God is opening for our faith, our fellowship, and our service.

For those who are in the Sunny South, please know we think of you often and keep you in our prayers. May God bless you wherever you are, near or far, with time to reflect, to listen, and to share your life in Christ in ways both ordinary and extraordinary.

Peace and Joy,  
Pastor Kathy



## Mission is: **Brighten your own Corner**

by Betty Redman

Mission, a gift to us and to others, allows us to participate in the ministry of Jesus Christ to the entire world. Scripture from both the Old and New Testaments clearly states that we need to be involved both locally and globally in mission - this the time, in our year, that we put a particular emphasis on mission.

- *Micah 6:8* reminds that God wants justice for all people, loves the poor, wants us to relieve suffering wherever we find it, asks us to take in the stranger and wants us “to walk humbly with the Lord.” We must demonstrate our love for God by showing it in our actions.
- *Matthew 25:34-40* tells us to feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, take in the stranger, provide clothing for the naked, care for the sick and visit those in prison. Wherever they are, whatever they need, and in whatever “prison” they find themselves, we are called to minister to “the least of these” because we are all of one family, all children of God
- *Acts 1:8* states, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” Believing that God’s Spirit is always with us, we are also called to witness in word and deed to the ends of the earth.

Mission is a primary ministry of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and it is a major focus in The Presbytery of Western North Carolina (PWNC) and its churches:

- Black Mountain Presbyterian Church has had a 20 year long relationship with their partner church in Guatemala and supports five PCUSA Mission Co-Workers.
- Trinity Church in Hendersonville supports the Center for Development in Central America (CDCA), which works in sustainable agriculture, economic development, health care, education and appropriate technology in Nicaragua.
- The Presbyterian Women Organization of First Presbyterian Church, Gastonia, works locally to provide baby blankets and caps, dolls, toboggans, lap robes for wheel chair residents, friends in need with walker bags, and shawls through their Sewing and Knitting for Missions Program.
- Crossnore Presbyterian is involved in both local and global missions in many ways that most of us are familiar with. In particular we support our sister church in Guatemala and Feeding Avery Families and others.
- At Myers Park Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, North Carolina, members are committed to improving health care and education in the Congo.
- Mayfield Presbyterian, Mayfield, New York, focuses on ending domestic violence. The Reverend Kevin Frederick, pastor of the Waldensian Church and a member of our Presbytery, is the moderator of the Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN.)

Mission is also a personal calling. It is not just going into “all the world”. A believer usually goes about daily life doing what seems to be his/her own initiative and will. It is likely that thoughts of believers are guided by God who directs us to a specific place at a specific time, giving us the opportunity to do something good for someone in need or to comfort someone with the Good News. The God-directed thought may come as awareness, an urging that, “Maybe I should...” but we can so easily ignore the thought. We don’t have time. What can I do? There are other people who can do that. So we make excuses and soon the thought or urging goes away and we resume our comfortable lives. So shut-ins go unvisited. The elderly feel they don’t count. The sick become depressed. The lonely give up hope.

When I was growing up mission was even then foremost in my Presbyterian Church, in Concord, NC -

especially among the women. One who had a great influence on my life was Miss Vance who led the Children's Rhythm Band and Chorus. We learned many songs with words that taught us what God expected of us. Among the songs was "Brighten the Corner Where You Are." She taught us the meaning of the words so that we were imprinted at an early age that we are God's emissaries wherever we are. The song was written by Ira Ogdon in 1913 after she gave up her dream of being an evangelist to take care of her ailing father. She wrote the song to remind herself and others that the pulpit and the mission field were not the only places we can make a difference. Often it is an act of caring and meeting someone's need and assuring them of God's love. There are many verses but the refrain is what I have always remembered.

Brighten the corner where you are.  
Brighten the corner where you are.  
Someone far from harbor you may guide across the bar.  
Brighten the corner where you are.  
Ira Ogdon, 1913

"Those who succeed are the ones that spot and act on opportunities as they are presented. Realize that preparation is the key to utilizing opportunities."

*Esteve Almirall*

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

*Edmund Burke*



## **Meet Rosemary Hebbard**

**by Barbara Ross**

On a brisk sunny morning just before thanksgiving, I had the opportunity to sit with *Rosemary Hebbard* for coffee. It was such a delightful time and I found out that we have a few things in common. Rosemary is one of the newest members of our congregation and I want to introduce her to you, her new church family.

She was born in High Point and her family moved a lot and she seemed to always be the "new kid". Rosemary told me that she grew up in a loving home and always knew that the Holy Spirit was with her. At 12 she joined Norview Baptist Church in Norfolk, Virginia and thought she wanted to be a missionary. That was sort of a short vision.

She married quite young and had a daughter, Kellene, who has 2 grown children, Rosemary Emily and Aaron. She attended Appalachian State University and got her BS in Education of the Mentally Handicapped and her Masters in Speech Pathology and Audiology. She came to us from Union Grove, NC and she got there as a result of family moves and job relocations.

While living in Union Grove, she joined a Methodist church and met a Navy Captain named Lee Hebbard. They discovered a mutual love of travel and did quite a bit of it during the 8 years they were married—traveling the country in an RV. Following Lee's death, she continued her interests in travel.

Then she met Charlie Sims. They discovered many things they had in common - mutual friends and acquaintances in Avery County, traveling and making lots of day trips on the motorcycle. Charlie brought her to Land Harbor in Avery County and to Crossnore Presbyterian Church. A cat named "Trip" lets Rosemary and Charles share his house in Land Harbor where if you know cats, you know he rules things!

Rosemary is active in our congregation through Bible Study, Sunday school, ushering, helping with Country Breakfasts, and other things—which you can learn about when you talk with her. She loves Facebook and uses it to keep up with family and friends and through it has found friends from the 60's. She also likes to communicate via e-mail.

I trust that this brief introduction of Rosemary will pique your interest and that you will want to hear more about her travels, especially her many trips to Europe and her RV travels.

Watch for Rosemary, introduce yourself and get to know her. You will be blessed.

## **What to do "On Golden Pond"**

by Janis Kenyon



Recently, I have had several reasons to look back on my life, at where I have come from, and wonder 'Where am I going?'. It's hard to examine your life from the perspective of nearing the end. But Clarence and I are not getting any younger and I have to wonder about all those last minute things. Like, will we be able to stay in our home to the end (even though Clarence says, "learn to love it") I look at those 4 bedrooms and 1700 sq. ft. and wonder how much longer I can keep up with the cleaning? Now, I know there are folks who say I worry too much about that cleaning, but it is deeply ingrained in me to keep a clean house. My mother was one of those people who cleaned cupboards and closets and washed windows with a vengeance every spring. And on Saturdays everyone had a hand in helping clean the house. My job, when I was 7, was to dust the wooden stairs to the upstairs bedrooms. I know, who do you know who dusts their stairs anymore or ever did, for that matter? I don't have stairs to dust now, but I still feel like I have to scrub my porches and stairs outside at least once a month, or who knows what will happen? And windows, oh my gosh, I can't even think about my windows. We still have the old fashioned storm windows to take off and put back on, and they are high enough to need a ladder to reach them. I can get on a ladder and fall off just because I'm so afraid of falling! Then, of course, there are carpets to keep clean, no easy challenge with an old dog in the house, and closets and cabinets and the refrigerator and stove and the garage and on and on. You women know what I am talking about.

And I haven't even begun to talk about the acre of yard we have that has to be mowed every week and the flower beds that need to be weeded, or the repairs that have to be made to the house and property. But I've had this conversation with many people in the past few weeks. Deciding what to do in your old age is one of those decisions we hate to think about, let alone put into motion.

Many people I know have had to do something at one time or another as they got older and I pray for

wisdom to learn for their experiences. When my children were younger (6 and 8) and before I finished my degree, I worked as a branch librarian in a small town outside of Tallahassee, Florida. It was a town about the size of Newland and was big enough to have a few stop lights and a small library that was a branch of the big one in Tallahassee. While I worked there I met a good many folks, my age now, who had moved there to be close to their children. One of their biggest complaints was the fact that they had no friends there; they had left their own good friends behind in the city they had moved from. Even then it started me thinking about what a dilemma it must be to get older.

My own mother moved 4 times before she found a place to stay. She and my Dad moved from a house next door to us in Tallahassee, Florida to a house my sister and brother-in-law owned in Georgetown, Texas. They lived there for six months and then my Dad died of cardiac arrest during a stress test. They were renting the house from my sister and when Daddy died Mama couldn't afford to pay the rent any more, so she had to find somewhere else to go. My sister tried to get her to live in an assisted living apartment, but Mama was a brittle diabetic and never knew when she would just pass out. She was afraid to stay by herself and you couldn't blame her. So finally, she moved in with my brother and his wife. That lasted about a year because they both worked and traveled and were rarely ever home anyway. So, she ended up coming to live with us. She loved the weather and the people she met here and stayed very happily until she fell in the night one night getting up to get something to eat. She fractured her neck and several days later she quietly passed away, as the snow she loved fell all around.

After my sister's husband passed away she suddenly found herself alone in Georgetown, Texas with no family close by. After much debate, she bought a small house in south Texas to be near her daughter. My niece is the head nurse in a nursing facility, so you know how much time she had to visit with her mother and you know the rest of the story, probably. My sister has moved back to Georgetown, Texas to be near friends her age who have more time to weave, knit and train the dogs that my sister loves to do.

The one uncle I have left moved from Texas to Michigan, shortly after his wife died so he could be close to his son. Within two months my cousin passed away of a heart attack. Now my uncle is in his duplex in Michigan with only a daughter-in-law close by.

Clarence's friend, Mac McKinney, who owns the Dulcimer Shop Clarence manages, built a new house and shop to build his dulcimers in Elizabethton several years ago because he wanted to be close to his son. A few months later his son passed away due to cancer. And Mac, who is 85, and his wife Elsie who is 90, still wish they had stayed in Foscoe.

My 95 year old aunt seems to have fared better with her decision to move to a retirement apartment building. When my Uncle Gene died of ALS, she sold her home and moved to the apartment. It's large enough for her to have some of her favorite things about her and small enough for her to be able to take care of herself. There are other people there her age, men and women, who love to play cards and read. Sometimes a new romance even blossoms! Someone is always knocking on my aunt's door when I call to talk to her; they are so good to check on each other. She plays cards, many nights, with her group of friends so they always know who is ok. She misses her yard and flowers, but everything else is close-by and convenient. She does have three sons in the same town and several grandchildren there, so someone is able to pick up her medicine and do her grocery shopping though. She seems happy enough when I talk to her, even though she will tell you "getting old is h---."

And so, here I am with still the same question. What will we do when we get too old to take care of our house and yard? And a better question – do we want to leave that for our children to decide for us??! Well, I

don't know about you, but I'd rather decide for myself and make that move while I can still do it and make my own decisions about what I want to keep or get rid of. So, I've been exploring the options recently and I think that has made it even harder to decide. There are so many options, and you HAVE heard that expression, "If you want to hear God laugh, tell him your plans." Sometimes we don't get to make the choice, I know, but, if I can, I'd like to do it myself. Of course, it also depends on your personal money situation. But I know from everyone else's experiences that moving to be near your children is not an option. They may have to move due to their job, or, as some others we know, they may pass on before we do. So, someday soon, I think I will just pack us up and move to a cute little apartment in a retirement complex where we can be among folks our own age that have similar likes and dislikes. If I have to move from there later, then MAYBE I'll let my kids make that decision.

*(If you want to know more about the types of options available for older folks check out (search) "Alternatives for seniors" on the web.)*

## **You are connected...Part 1**

by Betty Redman

Most people are connected to something but they may not realize it. Presbyterians are connected and connected and connected on and on and on. These connections may not be known to many Presbyterians who worship in our churches. This article is the first in a series which will attempt to explain why we are such a connected people. In this series we will look at connections so that we can understand what they are and why we operate the way we do. The old saying you may have heard, "Presbyterians do things decently and in order," is verified in our system of government laid out in these connections.

Our first connection is to God through Jesus Christ because we are children of the same God, as we profess. While not a part of our particular Presbyterian connectional system, it is evident in the fact that we join a congregation to show our love for God through Jesus Christ and our hope to obey and serve God as told to in the Bible. This connection to God also connects us to other human beings and to all of God's creation for which we are responsible.

Our second connection is to a particular church which is a community of believers who have come together to acknowledge their beliefs and to serve God as their gifts allow and as their willingness dictates. Membership in a Presbyterian church shows that we want to serve God through an institution dedicated to this service and that we are willing to work in the church to spread the Gospel and to serve God's people. We are God's hands and voice on earth. Membership in a congregation is not to be taken lightly. It is a serious commitment to serve. It is serious commitment to learn more about God and people, to welcome the opportunities to be in tune with what is expected of us, to listen to and respond to the Spirit as it calls and urges us on and to help and support others in their journeys of faith.

Next we connect to a Presbytery which is a designated number of churches in a geographical area and then to a Synod and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA). These connections are important part of what makes up the PCUSA of which we are a part. Think of it as a circle, this church of ours, which needs all its parts joined together to be whole. Watch for how we serve God through these connections and how each part is important.



## Christians in China Today

by Ted Kidder

An article by Robert Hefner in the November 2010 issue of the *Journal of Asian Studies* entitled “*Religious Resurgence in Asia*” estimates the number of Christians in China in this way: “...perhaps as many as 60 million consider themselves Christian.” Another article says this is the estimate of Protestants. Add to that the Catholics who have had a very old and distinguished presence in China. The American Bible Society in their sheet soliciting money for bibles for China says: “...unofficial estimates place the number of Christians in China at up to 130 million!” Something else I read said that Pentecostalism is sweeping the country, and much of it is apocalyptic, that is to say, prophetic for disasters that portend the Second Coming and so on. The provision of worship places has not kept up with the number of converts but the vigor and sheer numbers are too great to be repressed. As everyone knows, the government gags on these developments, as it does on any ground swell not organized from the top.

These wildly differing statistics, whether anything like realistic are nevertheless absolutely astonishing in view of the fact that China, and the rest of Asia, has developed rapidly economically and as history has shown, as a culture becomes more materialistic it tends to become more and more secular. A decline in religious interest usually follows. Exactly the opposite is happening in China. How can this be explained?

My parents were Presbyterian missionaries in north China from 1919. I was born and grew up there and came to the States to college in 1939. As the Japanese occupied Chinese cities and tensions increased, culminating in the attack on Pearl Harbor in December, 1941, by the instruction of the US consulate they had to leave in late 1940 and return to the States. They felt that the first phase of mission work was far from finished. That phase is the building up of a large body of devoted and energetic native Christians who are able to take over the Lord's work. Two full generations or more of foreign missionaries are usually needed to reach this goal.

The Japanese were defeated in 1945 and their troops had to evacuate China, but the Nationalists had been weakened fighting them and the Communists took all of China in 1949. They clamped down on religious practices (Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist, Muslim and Christian), closing churches and harassing temples. They made Christianity a special target because the Christian attitude toward freedom of thought and belief is the complete antithesis to the communist philosophy of allegiance to an atheistic political ideal. My parents began to think that all those years of “laboring in the vineyard” had been in vain and wondered how badly their Christian friends were being treated (there are some terrifying horror stories from the Cultural Revolution, particularly between 1966 and 1969); and, if a lifetime of work was being mercilessly wiped out. At best, Christians were then estimated to be in the thousands.

What the communist government now does officially, knowing that “Christians are the backbone of freedom of thought and expression” - and such views are universal and will be eliminated - is to “manage” the church as it does with every aspect of life. The government allows some churches to be built and appoints their administrative clergy, some of which are government spies. The Catholic Church has bishops appointed by the Vatican which the Chinese authorities will not recognize (one article said about 90 percent of them are this way), and bishops “appointed” by the government. This has created a great deal of animosity between the supporting groups. Some Christians who have fought against these government controls are now in prison. They can be incarcerated as being anti-government, not for their Christian beliefs. But China is an enormous country and application of the laws is spotty and uneven. All reports are that a great deal of “back room” worship goes on in secret everywhere, and those involved can usually avoid any open hostility to central government policies.

Regardless, the resurgence of religious interest may have several explanations. One, of course, is more open due to modern media and therefore recognizable and can be tabulated. Persecution and repression has made people's thought turn inward, seeking comfort in their beliefs and strength in community relationships. In view of the terrible suffering Christians face in some Moslem countries, China is a very bright spot. In Egypt, for instance, ironically, draconian laws had kept order and so had actually protected the Coptic Christians and their churches. Government pressure has been weakened and fanatical Moslems have attacked them. Iraq had been much the same, but the Christian population there is being decimated as many flee for their safety. Lebanon, once a "Christian country," is no longer recognizable as such. Despite major difficulties Christians face in China, their progress is heartening and encouraging. Remember that Christianity itself evolved under coercive conditions. The real explanation is that the Good News is irrepensible and throughout history there have always been people willing to come forward and proclaim the gospel. Losses are tragic, but for every loss there are exponential gains elsewhere. China is a shining example.

*This article was submitted to us just before Ted Kidder passed away. He was a great contributor to The Crossnore Chronicle and we will miss his articles. The Editors*

## Love in Our Losses

by George Gunn



Encountering loss is a universal human experience. It seems to begin early in our lives with things as simple as losing a contest, a card game, or a favorite plaything. It may be as profound, even at an early age, as the loss of a pet or a friend who moves away.

In our middle years often come the loss of a parent or grandparent and the necessity of dealing with death and dying. Every family circle is broken sooner or later by death. There are other experiences of loss common to our culture. Few people reach retirement without having lost a job or two along the way. Few people marry without the loss of an old love or a relationship that didn't work out.

One may also lose one's health or one's wealth. Who has not, on occasion, lost hope? Our ultimate maturity is shaped by how we manage our losses.

What remains for each of us is the matter of how our losses can be turned into gains. With what resources do we address this challenge to our humanity and our sanity? I believe the capacity to give and to receive love offers us hope. It may be that we need to receive love before we have the power to give love.

Trusting a providence that brings us through each testing time means we trust a Provider whose love never lets us down, never lets us go.



## The CPC Resource Library

by Betty Redman



Moving the resources from a classroom in the educational wing of the church to their own space is now underway. The new space is at the end of the educational wing hall where the Prayer Cloth ministry was until it ceased. Shelving already in place and room to move the older shelves made the room a convenient area for books and other resources.

Setting up the library is a multi-step and time-consuming process. Books have to be categorized, computerized, and identified as to title, author, publisher, and subject matter. Then a check-out system has to be developed. When all is finished, a catalog for use by the congregation has to be published. Finally, the space has to be turned into a comfortable and inviting area for users.

The library development began in the fall of 2015 and will probably take until the spring of 2016. In the meantime no new books are being accepted. Please be patient until the development of a new, more efficient and more beautiful resource space is completed.

### 5 Things Christianity Can Learn From Buddhism



About the Author: [Christian Piatt](http://myjesusproject.com/author/christian-piatt/): ( <http://myjesusproject.com/author/christian-piatt/> )

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*Could Christianity's future lie in Buddhism's past?* This is a possibility that's been haunting me lately, but in a good way, I think.

One big critique, understandably, of postmodern views on Christian spirituality is that there's too much time and energy spent deconstructing old systems and ways of thinking that need to be torn down or reimagined, while lacking the same effort to build up something more helpful -- more Christ-like -- in its place.

This is true, and I'm as guilty of it as anyone. In my current spiritual practices as part of the current year I'm calling "[My Jesus Project](#)," I'm trying to more fully understand what we mean when we talk about following Jesus. So it might seem strange to some that I would look to Buddhism for help in rebuilding my daily walk along the path of Christ.

Author and monastic Thich Nhat Hanh wrote a book years ago called [Living Buddha, Living Christ](#), that had a profound impact on me. At the time, I was "A-B-C," or "anything but Christian." I had been thrown out of my church of origin for asking too many questions, and up to that point, I assumed there was no way I could ever associate myself with Jesus or the Gospel again. Thankfully -- if surprisingly -- it was a Buddhist monk who reintroduced me to Jesus.

In his book, he draws many parallels between the life, teaching and practices of Jesus and those of

Siddhartha Gautama, later known as The Buddha after achieving enlightenment. For Jesus, I imagine a similar experience of enlightenment coming to him during his monastic retreat into the desert. And as I seek my own moments of illumination during [My Jesus Project](#), it occurs to me that Buddhism has much to teach us about where we might take Christianity in the 21st century.

No Ego -- One of the greatest weaknesses of modern Christianity has been the focus on the individual. This comes more from our individualistic culture than from Christianity itself. Though we focus on personal (often translated as sexual) sin, the idea of sin within the Hebrew Bible was more corporate. There was more of an interdependent, tribal culture, and as such, so were the shortcomings. We've also focused too much on personal salvation or a "personal relationship with Jesus Christ," which has also led to such bastardized interpretations as the false gospel of personal prosperity.

In Buddhist practices, one must learn to let the self die, in a manner of speaking, in order to create a deeper, more meaningful relationship and interdependence with others and the rest of creation. This is actually more consistent with ancient Jewish and Christian thought than our modern, egocentric version of Christianity.

Seeking Wisdom, not Knowledge -- If you were like me growing up, you were taught to be "armed with the Word," which basically meant knowing your Bible inside and out -- or at least just memorizing it - so you'd be ready to argue with anyone who refuted it in any way. Meanwhile, we didn't spend much, if any, time actually experiencing the "real world." Though our present culture values amassing a wealth of knowledge, or expertise, it actually does very little to prepare us to live in a Christ-like way beyond the church walls.

Wisdom, unlike knowledge, comes as a byproduct of lived experience. Something happens, and as often as not, we screw up. Then we reflect, learn and change our attitudes or behaviors moving forward. Christianity, however, too often teaches us to entrench ourselves in self-righteousness, seeking instead to change others to be more like us. (God forbid we would be changed by someone who isn't a Christian.) But true wisdom means we learn and are affected by all of our experiences, and use that wisdom as an opportunity to do and be better in the future.

Right-Heartedness Over Right Belief -- When someone joins a Christian church, or before they get baptized or commit their lives to Christ, we inevitably ask them with three telltale words: "DO YOU BELIEVE..." But Jesus didn't ask people what they believed, or to recite some creed before following him or going and doing for others what he did for them. He was more concerned with the nature of their hearts than any claim of belief.

This is where a fundamental tenet of Buddhism serves us very well. We're taught that right hearts, lead to right thoughts, and this, in turn, leads to right action. But it all begins with the orientation of our hearts, how we see, receive and respond to the world. We're not sent out into the world so much to coerce people into like-thought; rather, we're charged with going out and offering ourselves fully, sacrificially in humble service to others, regardless of who they are, what they believe or what the result might be for us.

Impermanence -- We seem to become pretty fixated on some false correlation between our faithfulness and the lifespan of our churches and denominations. We know we're doing God's work if our churches are full, budgets are met and we can hand off a healthy institutional legacy to those who come after us. But Jesus preached the destruction of the temple not just to freak people out; he was warning them not to cling too tightly to all the trappings of religion around them that would inevitably crumble and fail.

We can learn much from the Buddhist artistic discipline of creating mandalas. These elaborate sand-art designs sometimes take weeks or more to make, with several monks attending to them many hours each day. And though our instinct is generally to preserve and even defend something beautiful, the mandala is intentionally destroyed not long after it is finished. The sand is returned to the earth and the only remaining impression of the mandala is in our consciousness. It's a humbling exercise in letting go; one from which we can learn a great deal.

Care for All Creation -- We Christians have been greatly affected by the industrial revolution in ways that have negatively impacted our relationship with the rest of creation. This, combined with an over-emphasis of disdain for our own bodies and sexual identities, has created a sense of disembodiment that also causes us to feel less interdependent on each other and less dependent on all of nature. The notion of dominionism falsely teaches within some Christian circles that the planet is ours to use as we please. And some even go so far as to suggest that anything we can do to help hasten the end-times gets us that much closer to heralding God's kingdom on earth.

Buddhism, however, teaches simplicity, humility and intentional care for all of creation. Practices of mindfulness and humility help us loosen our grasp on personal desire and avail ourselves to the excesses and insensitivity of our habits. When we regain a healthier sense of our own places within a much larger, very delicate ecosystem, we not only treat our surroundings with more care; we treat ourselves with greater care as well.

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