

Humor goes Viral

After a shipwreck, a man washes up on a remote island. He finds a number of other castaways already living there, so he joins the group. He notices that they have a strange custom. Every evening as they sit around the fire, someone will call out a number, and then the others laugh. And then someone else will call out another number, and there will be laughter, or maybe groans. The responses vary, but they always seem appreciated by the group. Finally he asks what's going on. It turns out that the others have been there for such a long time, that they've heard all of each others' jokes. They still enjoy them, but to avoid the tedium of telling the whole joke, they just say a number that indicates a particular one. In an effort to fit in, he decides to give it a try. "Twenty-four" he says. Silence. He tries another number: "Sixteen!" Again, silence. He doesn't understand. "Why aren't you laughing?" he asks. The others glance at each other furtively, but say nothing until one of the senior members says, as gently as he can, "Son, some people just don't know how to tell a joke."

In the first few weeks of COVID-19 social distancing, I noticed there seemed to be an explosion of creativity on Facebook. A lot of it, if not most, was humorous. All sorts of humor – wry, satirical, mirthful, dark (viral humor, like gallows humor, but more infectious. *wink*).

Humor is a very human, and healthy, response to trauma. I was listening to an expert talking about the psychological toll the pandemic is taking on health professionals. He said that one of the things that's helpful in dealing with the stress is humor.

We started with the Daily Devotionals as a way of staying connected as a community. These evolved into what we are now calling Reflections, because they started to go beyond what we think of a devotionals. We have had reflections on hymns, historical anecdotes, stories about food and meals, and recipes. It feels like the normal exchange that happens in a community such as ours, and thus it partially serves to achieve the purpose of staying connected.

But one thing has been missing. Jokes. I appreciated it when Jan circulated her Lone Ranger and Tonto joke a while back. So, in the same way that Susan and John put out a call for recipes, I would like to put out a call for jokes. (Reflection

writers: I am not suggesting that the next round of reflections should be joke based.) If you have a good clean joke, email it to the WRMC Google Group using this address: wrmchurch@googlegroups.com, or send it to the church office by paper mail. I know this community has been around for a long time, and perhaps many of you already know all the standard jokes. Please do not respond to this request by sending in “thirty-five” as your joke (this means you, Ted).

I'll leave you with another one:

A group of Mennonites is meeting at a hotel for a conference. At the same venue, the Better Business Bureau is also having a meeting. In the evening, both groups are served a meal in their respective conference rooms. The appetizer is watermelon salad. The watermelon for the BBB was supposed to be spiked with liquor, but the Mennonites' was not. Unfortunately, the two orders were swapped, and the Mennonites got the spiked watermelon. The head chef is worried, so he sends one of the waiters to see what's happening with the Mennonites. A few minutes the waiter comes back. “It's OK,” he says, “they're putting the seeds in their pockets.”

