

Earth Care and Spirituality

Reflection for October 2020

Sheep Island: Good Company, Beauty, and Abundance

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Since childhood my idea of a perfect adventure has been to go to an island off the Maine coast for a picnic, in a much-loved family boat and in the company of much-loved family members.

The sky was blue and clear, the air fresh and mild, and wind moderate so our little power dory was only dancing, not rocking or rolling. Our destination was Sheep Island, in an archipelago of favorite places visited on varying occasions over many decades. The party was to be made up of my wife and our little dog, my second son and wife and son and their large dog, arriving in a catboat from their neighboring island vacation spot.

Sheep Island is small enough so that anyone with some energy can walk around its shores after lunch in a comfortable amount of time. It is charming enough to offer a few small beaches of sand and shells, some flat and easily traversed ledges, some slightly more challenging passages where climbing is required, and all the way around, panoramic views of the amazing coast near Mount Desert Island.

Arriving, we anchored near the best beach of all, seeing another picnic boat and crowd just heading for shore. One member of the party walked over to us as we landed at the other end of the beach, and pleasantly informed us that it would be fine with them if we picnicked there. I was not pleased.

Our picnic with beloved folks and cooperative pets was delightful. During the conversation time - which we chose instead of our traditional shore walk - two groups of friendly folks walked by us on their circumnavigations, speaking of cruising here and discovering this to be a perfect place for a shore adventure. It was good to see them, but I kept remarking to my group that in the old days, we would be there alone.

As we departed, we motored around the island and were astonished to see that there were several more picnic parties ashore at various points! All seemed to be enjoying themselves.

I realized that we were in good company, surrounded by God's inspiring creation and our fellow travelers in this life. We all knew how to spend a glorious summer day in a place untouched by any sort of human invention or interference. I was beguiled to abandon my earlier selfish annoyance.

We were, and are, all God's children, blessed by God's love and in the midst of God's world which was given to us in beauty and abundance!

What could be better than that? We wended our way home in deep joy and contentment.

Rev John MacDuffie is a retired UCC minister who has served eight churches across Maine, most recently as pastor of the Eastport church. He loves to mess around with small boats, make them seaworthy, and head out in them to explore islands off the Maine Coast. John is a member and Treasurer of Somesville Union Meeting House church, UCC.