

The Cups On My Desk

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I have a collection of cups on my desk – coffee mugs in various states of grunge. The cream colored one with my name written on it is from my very first job in high school, working at the Marshfield Public Library. I used it for instant soup and cocoa then, not yet having acquired the caffeine habit. The same is true for the insulated plastic mug that looks like it was painted with chocolate milk. It was my special cocoa cup at Grandma Dickert's when I was little. Since it is unbreakable, it has accompanied me on many mission trips for both my coffee and my water breaks. More than one of these cups bring special people to mind. I also have a cup of heaven – the word is written across a delicate cloud-filled sky. This cup reminds me of Dustin Wilkinson – the son of one of my colleagues at First Church in Green Bay, who died at the age of 15 of a brain tumor. Dustin's father, Dave, gave everyone on the staff one of these cups in gratitude for our support during his illness. I often remember Dustin's memorial service amidst all the Easter flowers, thinking of Jesus in Gethsemane asking for this cup to pass from him. Perhaps my favorite cup to drink from is the tall cobalt blue cup. All of us who were part of a women's retreat received a cup like this, labeled "the Cup of Faith." It's my favorite color, and holds more than the others, which is probably the totally unspiritual reason for its place in my heart.

When I arrived here at First Church in Wausau, Bernadette had left me many things on her desk – now my desk – to welcome me. Keys for every door and cabinet. Gift certificates for Culvers. Lists of tidbits that are good to know. And a coffee mug that says "The BOSS!" in large orange letters. It's still on my desk, though for reasons I'll leave to the Freudian analysts, I don't drink from that cup. I let it hold my pencils.

Lately, there's been a new cup on my desk. Like the others, it reminds me where I come from. It reminds me who I am. It reminds me what I've come through, and what I am called to. It's never held coffee, nor pencils, nor hot cocoa – just grape juice. It's one of the silver communion cups this congregation uses for worship. Most of the plating is worn off of it on one side, which is how it came to be on my desk. Wills and Memorials has been exploring the relative costs of re-plating vs. replacing the cups, and this sample has been making the rounds of jewelers and shops. At first, I thought it looked out of place next to the stapler and the tape dispenser. But now I feel like this is where it belongs. The cup that ties us to Christ should be something that follows us to our work, and our home, and our play. I think I'll leave it there a bit longer, next to the coffee cups of questionable cleanliness. It is beginning to look at home.