

## Celtic Service Reflection

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St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Richmond, VA

The day after Pentecost Sunday, I left for a week of vacation. I flew out to Boulder, CO, to meet with a friend studying there. From Boulder, we planned to road trip to Memphis, TN to attend a friend's wedding, stopping in northern Arkansas to hike along the Buffalo River Trail. I was excited for vacation not just because I knew it was going to be a great time, but also because I knew that the week after I returned I was going to reflect at Celtic. Excellent, I thought. A week of friends and leisure would surely provide me an anecdote or two for my reflection.

### **Then Snowball happened.**

Since moving to Richmond the beginning of this year, my parents have graciously allowed me to drive one of their cars. I had started to save up for a car on my own, and luckily my neighbors back home were looking to sell their old car. I jumped at the opportunity, and the car was mine. The only catch? It was stick. Seeing as I had never driven manual before, I was fairly apprehensive about my new car. But learning to drive stick seemed like a useful skill, I needed a car, it seemed like a good opportunity.

**Thankfully, before I drove up Thursday night, I received a brief tutorial from my boss, Michael Sweeney, on his manual car. The following day, my dad and I took my new car, named Snowball by the previous owner, into the cul de sac down the street. I started practicing the feel of simultaneously releasing the clutch and gently tapping the accelerator to get the car into first gear.**

I grew to resent Snowball quickly; it was really the most visceral, angry animosity I've had towards anything, human or otherwise, in some time. I mean I was not in a good place. I popped the clutch, I revved the engine like I was a Formula One driver. After botching getting Snowball into first over

and over again, I got so frustrated that I told my dad to drive us home. I certainly couldn't make it down the street to our house. I ate lunch and crankily declared I needed a nap.

**Several hours of practice and a day later, I successfully drove Snowball down from northern Virginia to Richmond. Thanks be to God. Even so, what strikes me about these past few days is not how I lurched my way to and through Richmond.**

What strikes me about this whole new car saga was my sheer dependence on others. I mean I couldn't do anything by myself. I didn't know how to buy a car, what accessories I'd need, how to even operate the vehicle. Yes, that was humbling. Like many people, I sometimes delude myself into thinking I'm entirely self-sufficient. There was something deeper to it as well. These past several days have led to a renewed sense of awareness.

**It's an awareness of Michael, for taking some time out of his day to give me a brief driving lesson before I went home to retrieve my car.**

It's my dad, who took a day off of work to help me work on the car and teach me how to drive.

**It's my mom and my neighbors, Torrance and Sam, for orchestrating the car sale in the first place and providing words of encouragement.**

It's our other neighbors, with whom I have no relationship, who didn't honk at me for repeatedly stalling at a four way stop.

**This feels like grace to me. I didn't, and still don't, have all the answers. I don't feel like I earned their time, help, or patience. I feel like the way they spent their time and resources says more about who they are than about who I am. And yet, they showed up. It turns out my only task was to gratefully accept, hands, heart, and mind open, and let God move through the people in my life. Accept the lesson, the advice, the time spent on me rather than something else.**

Because just like the people I mentioned, God shows up too. God shows up all the time. God is always showing up. Accept, be thankful, and perceive the ways that God is moving throughout the world. You certainly don't need to go on vacation to do that.