

Dear Friends;

Amongst the leftover municipal election signs on the yards in my neighbourhood there are other signs of the season. Tombstones, skulls, and even a guillotine and executioner. One house down the street has a body hanging by a rope from a tree. Others have yellow tape like the police use at the scene of a murder.

I know that people intend all this to be funny, but I find it creepy. I'm ok with the giant blown up pumpkin, but I can't figure out why people enjoy having images of death in front of their homes.

Are they people of such deep faith that death has no sting? Or have they been blessed to have no personal encounters with death? Maybe it's just that in the comfortable life of our society, people feel insulated somehow.

I must sound like Scrooge (or whatever the Hallowe'en version would be), but don't get me wrong, I love Hallowe'en. As a child I loved dressing up and having people unable to guess who I was. Or so I thought – now I wonder if they were the better actors as they projected confusion about the identity of each little costumed person. The candy was great too, in a household where we didn't have a lot of candy normally, but it was the dressing up that was the best. These days I get great pleasure out of seeing kids on their way to school in their costumes, and excitedly going from door to door.

Apparently in earlier times, the Celts believed that wearing costumes and masks would ward off harmful spirits. Disguising oneself as someone scary would chase away those spirits who might bring harm.

In my United Church upbringing there was never anything but the most tenuous connection between Hallowe'en and anything religious. It was purely a time for costumes, jack o'lanterns, candy, and fun. It remains that way for me, and that's enough.

I think God is pleased when we have fun, and especially when all of us conspire to create fun for children.

Peace and blessings.

Nora Sanders