

Pineridge

We're on a few days of vacation and the weather here today is gorgeous. The sun is shining, a light breeze is blowing, the temperature is in the low 70s, and there is virtually no humidity in the air. Shadows of shade linger throughout the backyard and there is a sense that all is well with the world, at least this little part of the world we momentarily inhabit. Our daughter lives here in this house, which, one day, is to be our retirement house.

The dead-end street is unpaved, so the only cars that drive past are neighbors. My sister lives next door, and next to her is a young couple with three children. The "preacher" lives across the street from them. His church is on the corner. I guess you would characterize it as evangelical, marked by biblical literalism and bad music, but I wonder some time just what kind of "good news" he has to share. He and his family stay pretty much to themselves. Next to him and across from us live Dolly and Robert, a retired couple, just a few years older than Mary and I. Robert is currently in the hospital and not doing well. The house has a forlorn look about it without them there. Usually one or both of them are in the yard cutting grass, trimming shrubbery, or tending the very large vegetable garden that graces the back yard. There is a single mother with two little boys who live next to them. The boys are as country-as-they-come, at least by their accents, but they are cute, innocent, delightful, and unfailingly polite. Their mother often plays catch with them in the front yard. Fab and George live next door. George works in construction and is a motorcycle enthusiast and Fab, who still speaks with a slight French accent, works from home. A retired military man, with less hair than I, lives at the end of the street and across the street from him is the air conditioning and heating guy. Dogs bark; you can hear roosters crow; goats meander in the large lot behind our house, and sometimes you can catch a glimpse of a horse back there.

Some of these neighbors have lived on the street for decades. They raised their children here; their grandchildren come to visit here. Others of us are newer. As far as I know, no one has ever thrown a block party, but there is a sense of community here, a sense of caring for your neighbor that you don't often see anymore, even if that caring means just staying out of his or her business, or from time to time putting up with minor irritations or lending a helping hand.

Beyond our little street, Pineridge still has a small town feel. There isn't much traffic, at least during most of the day, though around 5:00 p.m. you may have to wait a few minutes at the four-way stop in South Congaree, our neighboring town just across the railroad tracks. Downtown Columbia, though, is not more than a twenty or thirty minutes away (you can see the skyline from a couple of spots in Pineridge), and two major interstate highways intersect less than four miles away. Yet, our little world continues at a slower pace, a more relaxed pace. It's a nice place to visit and one day, perhaps, to be.

Grace and peace be with you.

Dudley