

Now about them kids...

I guess it's time to return to the topic of kids- subbing and at church. The past week I was back to two days of subbing after my big half-day Thanksgiving week. I was lucky to get even that as only one district I am signed up with had classes at all that week, and only Monday and Tuesday. Monday of course is a photo day for me which left only Tuesday for work. So this past week I did middle school for two days in two different districts. What happened in both cases was the teachers were taking a second sick day in a row, but fortunately this did not spell disaster like in that one BD/ED classroom in near-urban district. The first class was a Spanish class, and half of a husband-wife team. They even had classrooms right next to each other. This is the second time I have ever encountered this, the first being in hometown district where a husband and wife both teach the same grade of science- one on each of the two teams for that grade. Incidentally at that school there is also another married couple, but in their case they teach two different things. So back to Spanish, it was a very easy day- for all classes I showed a video. Now, she teaches both 7th and 8th grades, but everyone still got the same video- the celebration of Christmas in Mexico. What was it? Oh, yes- Piñatas, Posadas, and Pastorelas was the title. I'm sure you're familiar with the first- a seeming staple of Mexican celebrations. The other two mean a party and a Christmas play, respectively.

Wednesday I filled in for an 8th grade resource teacher, though she had one 7th grade reading group. This was a bit more interactive than the Spanish class, at least for some of the periods. As mentioned, I worked with a reading group for one period, led an interesting homeroom activity where the kids picked sides with questions about what is more important to them and then some explained their choices, acted as an assistant in a language arts block, watched over a tutorial

period, and led another block period with reading a story together and then watching over the kids as they defined words from the story. A varied day for sure, unlike typical middle school classes.

Next post: the kids at church this week- I'm already tired of writing...

Too much free time

Who complains about too much free time? Well, with no wife or kids, a dislike for many common social activities- okay let's just go with the truth here and say no friends I hang out with outside of church, and work that takes less than the normal eight hours plus lunch per standard, I just have too much free time. What do I do with it? Get movies from the library, spend time on the internet, and play games mostly- what a life, eh? In the last few days I have even purchased several games on [Steam](#)- did they have to make it so easy? I didn't even use steam until they had a \$9.99 sale on their [Orange Box](#) collection a few months ago. Now I have the complete Luxor marble game collection, Ghostbusters, GRID, and Osmos. Another service called [Direct2Drive](#) also successfully tempted me with a \$5 sale a short time back. I added no less than a half-dozen games from them including Neverwinter Nights 2 and Serious Sam Gold. A waste of time and money really. Well, I have been playing a lot of Serious Sam and the Luxor games, so just a waste of time in their case. To be fair, I didn't pay much for any of the titles, nowhere near full price, but still...

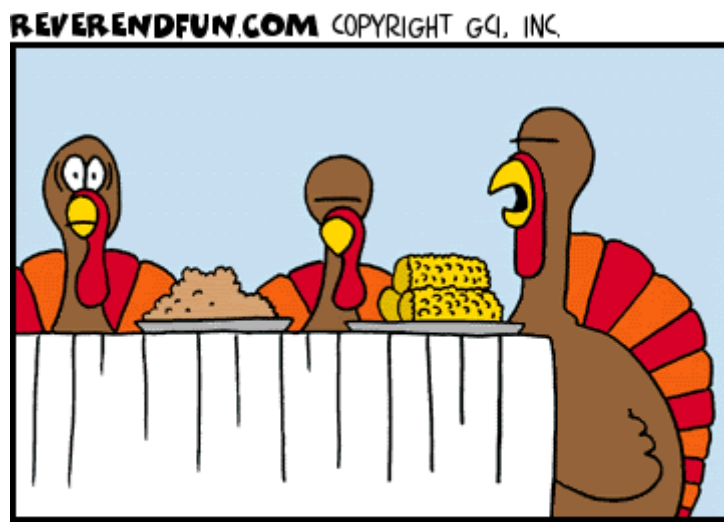
So what can I do instead? Theatre groups abound in this area, but I know very few of them anymore- I would have to look them

up again. I have also looked a little into compassion ministries, serving those in need. I still have to look it up on the church website as I was directed to a few weeks ago. The obvious one in most people's minds is the friends issue. I have been to singles group, but it was very uncomfortable for me so I really don't go anymore. No friends that way. Perhaps through the other two potential outlets? I don't know. I know I have needed to schedule a quiet time with God, but I have known that for so long I wonder if I am really capable?

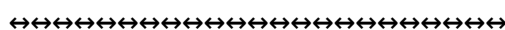
For now though I just sit here on the computer...

Happy Thanksgiving!

A little turkey day humor



WE GIVE THANKS FOR ALL THE BOUNTY THAT
FARMER BOB HAS BLESSED US ALL WITH THESE
PAST FEW MONTHS





HAPPY

THANKSGIVING!

No fishing

So, fishing for comments clearly doesn't work on this blog. The answer about the two dog videos is for one of them the owner offers the treats two different ways, palm up and palm down. The dog turns her head when offered the wrong way. In the other video the hand is offering it the same way every time, so either this dog doesn't like our current Prez or some other form of training is going on outside of the camera.

Real post coming soon- watch this spot. ☐

Conserva-pups

I had a little laugh out of these videos. Now let's all forget about that dog-training stuff we all have read about or seen on Animal Planet and the like, and just imagine these dogs are as conservative as their humans. ☐

Okay, I tried to get you to suspend disbelief for a moment- did it work? Anyway, one of these videos has a definite giveaway on the training- can you find it? The other one I'm guessing is happening off-camera unless I missed it.

zero tolerance = zero brains

When my nephew was in 5th grade, he accidentally brought his pocketknife, the onetime staple of just about every American boy, to school. Naturally, he got suspended. So was he caught showing it off to his friends? Victim of a random search? Nope. Realizing he did something wrong by bringing it to school, he walked up to his teacher, handed him the knife, and told him he accidentally left it in his pocket and didn't mean to bring it to school. He might as well have been showing it off for all that confession got him. Thanks to zero tolerance, motive could never be considered in his punishment. My brother said at the time his teacher should have just kept it to himself, but realistically he would have been fired if the principal somehow found out, also thanks to zero ~~brains~~ tolerance.

Flash forward to today, and history repeats itself on a larger scale, at least where consequences are concerned. And to a military veteran no less. This former soldier found a black bag in his garden, took it inside, and found a gun inside. Being a good citizen, or so he thought, he brought it in to the police who promptly arrested him. He has since been convicted by a jury and now faces a minimum five-year prison term. From the article:

Prosecuting, Brian Stalk, explained to the jury that possession of a firearm was a "strict liability" charge -

therefore Mr Clarke's allegedly honest intent was irrelevant.

Just by having the gun in his possession he was guilty of the charge, and has no defence in law against it, he added.

But despite this, Mr Blackman urged members of the jury to consider how they would respond if they found a gun.

He said: "This is a very small case with a very big principle.

"You could be walking to a railway station on the way to work and find a firearm in a bin in the park.

"Is it unreasonable to take it to the police station?"

Paul Clarke will be sentenced on December 11.

Judge Christopher Critchlow said: "This is an unusual case, but in law there is no dispute that Mr Clarke has no defence to this charge.

"The intention of anybody possessing a firearm is irrelevant."

Is this crazy, or what? It happened in the UK, but with the way liberalism is taking hold in this country we won't be far behind. While we have the NRA fighting against such gun-possession laws, all it would take is a single rogue judge to interpret the 2nd Amendment the wrong way and we will be a giant step closer to life in the UK.

Oh yes, click for the entire article:

[**Ex-soldier faces jail for handing in gun**](#)

Priceless dog therapy

Okay, those are two things mashed together in the title describing events of Wednesday, my only day of subbing this week (though I am still trying for some Friday work). What happened to Tuesday? Well, I had to push my Monday photo work to Tuesday due to that annoyance to the daily routine known as jury duty, or in my case non-duty. Fortunately no driving was required for this civic duty as the location was Chicago. In fact, I would just not show up rather than drive there due to the ridiculous traffic. Fortunately, the train stations are within walking distance both from my home and the courthouse in the city. I also was glad this was the civil court instead of the criminal one- I don't know how people are able to serve on juries for criminal trials that can often take weeks to complete. I realize jobs can't fire you for jury duty but they don't have to pay you, and that lack of pay would be a huge problem, at least for me. You noticed, I'm sure, that I wrote "non-duty" earlier. What actually happened was my group got called down (while I was in the bathroom no less) and we went down to a courtroom, only to wait and be told that the two parties came to a settlement so no jury would need to be picked. So we went back up to the jury waiting room in case we might be needed again. About an hour later we were called up again, jury trial take two, or so I thought. However, this time we were given our checks and sent home- I guess being called up once can count as our civic duty even if we didn't make it to jury selection, let alone trial. We did have to wait until they were sure we would no longer be needed though. With half the day still left, I stopped for lunch since the next train wouldn't depart for another 45 minutes. Unfortunately, with the light leaving us earlier these days I was not able to go to even one of the dealers since I couldn't be sure how long it would take and didn't want to make a wasted hour round-trip anywhere. Yes, I could have blogged Monday, but I just wasn't up to it.

Which leads us to the topic of the title, my sub-job Wednesday. I had to get up at 5:30 to start looking since it is near impossible this year to get a sub job in advance for some reason. I somehow managed to secure one at a nearby school in their mentally-impaired program. I must remember never to show up any later than 10-minutes early at this school. I was right on time, but ended up about ten minutes late because they closed the lot by the front doors due to buses meaning I had to ask where the other lot was, wait in traffic to get to it, suffer leagues of parents dropping off their kids in the very same lot, find a spot, then walk a quarter mile back to the front doors of the school. I did note there were still spots left in the front lot as I headed to the doors.

So I eventually made it to the classroom, somehow still before the kids arrived to the class (though I still had to work my way around several at their lockers). Being a MI class there were of course teaching assistants so I was able to cool down from the hassle of my arrival. They showed me the schedule for the day, but being Vet's day that schedule was just made to be broken. Instead of an hour of guided reading, for example, they had maybe 20 minutes before heading to their 2nd-grade buddy class. That teacher talked a little bit about Veteran's Day, and then a couple of soldiers came in to visit- one from the Army, the other a Marine. Both had served time in you-know-what part of the world (the marine couldn't tell us where- essentially saying it was classified, but the army soldier had been to Afghanistan). They talked a little about what they did, what life was like with their respective units, and their families. The 2nd-graders had written several questions to ask them during their visit. It was quite interesting. Once the principal came in and whisked them to their next class to visit, we headed back to our own room for snack time. The next schedule change came during this time. Just as they finished eating and sat down to read silently, in walks a vet. Okay, she wasn't a vet but I just had to use

that play on words. Notice how I didn't capitalize the word this time? That's because this person was a pet therapist, if not a veterinarian. Both work with pets, though for different reasons- oh never mind. So my pun didn't work- sue me. ☐

Anyway, the therapist reminded the kids how to handle the dog (apparently she had been here before), making sure they let this lap dog sniff their hands before they could pet him. She also taught them how to give the dog treats (in an open hand, because the dog could bite your fingers if you hold the treat by the thumb and forefinger). She also had the dog do some tricks. The kids one at a time rolled a die and the dog would jump through a hoop for the number of times it showed, then later they did dog bowling where the kids would hide a treat among foam pins, and the dog would knock a number of them down to get to the treat. Cute.

The kids got their silent reading in, and then we skipped math to do calendar in the short time left before lunch. This is where the next part of the title comes into play- the look of surprise on a 5th-grader's face when you sneak up behind him while he's eating lunch and ask him a question in a place he does not expect to hear or see his church and summer camp leader as he turns and recognizes me. Priceless. As I talked to him, two more kids from my church got up to talk to me- one of whom I was going to talk to next, the other a surprise to me. What was funny about this encounter was the girl who I had worked with in church drama last year didn't know what to call me since she only remembered my first name, which is what I use at church- Mr. Derek. She had clearly been taught to not use an adult's first name at school. Maybe I told her last year, I don't know. I didn't know the third one came to this school, but this school being the closest to my church means several kids do happen to attend school here. I know of three others in the junior high area who I know I have mentioned before (two are the girl's brothers, twins whom I have also worked with at church).

The rest of the day was pretty mild. I had an extra half-hour off due to the kids going to music, and when they came back we scrapped writing for some reason to watch part of a movie. You know, I don't think I have ever watched *101 Dalmatians* before even though I kind of know the story. We only watched a little bit of it before getting ready to go home, where I rested up until choir rehearsal, where I just want to mention that another pair of twins I taught a few years ago are regularly a part of- they finally came down to the tenor section after singing alto for the last couple of years (hey, they were 12-13 at the time!). I can even name a couple more sets of twins and a set of triplets too. I don't know why, but they are not all that uncommon at my church. Well, if I can think of some story to write about them sometime I may say some more.

Site update

I *finally* added a link to Mare-Mare's site under **friends** on the right, and she's right at the top of the list too (nothing to do with alphabetical order or any such nonsense like that now... ☹). Maybe now I will remember to visit her site more often. ☹

More of last week's news...

When mentioning costumes for the 5th grade class I subbed for last week, I forgot to mention one other costume. Or two, rather, though only one of them was in my class. It is

strange it slipped my mind because this boy was wearing a video-game-related costume which was very good. He came as Mario, complete in the right colors with hat, large white cartoon gloves, and of course, mustache (though this piece kept falling off). I mentioned to him that with his build he might have made a good Luigi too, but his costume did have the extra padding to make him pudgy ala Mario. During the costume show, who walked across the stage with (I think) a third-grade class but Luigi, which from a distance also looked pretty good. When our Mario waved to him I figured they were brothers, but when I asked him about it the only fraternal relationship was in the characters, so this just made for a cool coincidence.

I said I would mention Friday night, so I am finally getting around to it. Friday night was our second annual movie night for 4th and 5th grade. Last year we saw the excellent [Meet the Robinsons](#). This year was [Bolt](#). Having never seen this movie before I was looking forward to it even if I wouldn't really get to see if I had to keep too much of a watchful eye on the kids (as it happily turns out, my fears here were unfounded and I was able to watch the whole thing). Before the movie, however, there was game and pizza time. This year they separated the boys and the girls so one group was playing games while the other ate. We started out in the gym. There was a fun game set up called "the gauntlet" but before we did that we warmed up with another game, link tag. No, this has nothing to do with:

[collegehumor]<https://www.collegehumor.com/video:1923420>[/collegehumor]

though that's a hilarious Family Guy-esque video (click to see it in a larger size). It is a game with one (or a few) runner(s) and one (or a few) tagger(s) with the rest spread out, standing linked in pairs. At any time the runner can link up with one pair and the person on the opposite side would become a new runner so the pair doesn't become a trio.

If the tagger tags the runner, the runner becomes the tagger and the former tagger links up with a pair and a new person becomes the runner. I think we had played this before a couple of years ago, calling it squirrel tag. After this game came- The Gauntlet. This is just as insidious as it sounds. The kids have to run through a course, going over or under as the course dictates, while trying to avoid getting hit by balls thrown by us leaders (heh, heh...). If hit, they would have to go back to the beginning. For those of you crying "aww, no fair for the kids," don't worry- they got their turn getting back at us. I didn't make it very far...

So for food time, we had pizza. I was expecting the variety made in our church's kitchen, but it turned out they ordered from Little Caesars. The parents had to pay for this event, so why not? This was the time where we leaders got to hang out with a few boys sitting together, thereby selecting our small groups for the end of the night. After the boys grabbed their dinner, I waited a minute or so before grabbing my own and sitting down with four boys. There were almost a dozen guy leaders, so the small groups were quite small. There were more girls and fewer girl leaders present, so their groups I understand were a bit larger. Did I mention this was an outreach event? The kids were encouraged to invite friends who didn't normally come to our church, so it turned out that two of these boys were such invitees. In fact, both were invited by one of the other boys, but all four actually knew each other from school. After a brief time in conversation with them, it was time for the movie. We cleaned up and headed to the learning center where the movie was shown on two screens. We were supposed to sit with our groups, but the boys kind of crowded together, so I sat in the row right in front of them instead. Don't worry, the seating was tiered and the screens high up besides so I didn't block their view.

□

As I wrote, we were able to enjoy the whole movie with no more

distraction than some kids going to the bathroom now and again. They even provided popcorn for the whole movie experience. Now, I typically say I don't like popcorn all that much, but it is strange that I typically find myself eating it anyway, and this night was no exception. While not in the same class as Meet the Robinsons IMHO, I still enjoyed this movie about a dog raised thinking his "human" was a spy constantly threatened by the evil Dr. Calico (with his evil cats of course) and that he was a superhero- managing to escape from his trailer, he heads out on a mission to save his human whom he thought was captured (they ended the day's shooting on this cliffhanger) but in fact headed home as this was after all just a TV show no matter what Bolt was raised to believe.

Finally, Pastor Steve came out and talked a little, focusing on superheroes and how God is the only superhero. It was just a bit more exciting than what I just wrote, but you get the idea. We then broke into our small groups and talked some more about it, ending with handing out Gospel tracts that folds in several ways to reveal the message. I actually picked up a fifth boy who hadn't been selected already by another leader so I may have ended up with the largest boy's group of the night. I felt the discussion went very well. The two visitors actually attended different churches, so they weren't as green as expected in an outreach event, but that was okay as I'm sure everyone still picked up something from the small group, especially on sharing Christ with others if they had already had a relationship with Him.

It was a great night- I can't wait for Winterblast in a few months- the overnigher at the church. The only disappointing time was seeing another fifth-grade boy at the church with his mom for a single-parents meeting who chose to not attend movie night because the ones he wanted to invite were not in 4th or 5th grade, which I learned was sort of a limit in this event though not strictly enforced.

That October Holiday

So what does it mean when it's November and I still have posts from September sitting on my front page? Still not all that excited to blog I guess. It has now been over a week since some of my Ohio friends came out and we all went haunt hopping. It's a little late to review them, and I'm no expert on this sort of thing anyway so I think I'll just say that it was a good time had by all of us. Fortunately the threatening rain stayed away. Sorry you had to miss the last haunt, J and M. According to C & L it was really good, though whether it be that I was third in a group or just my logical mind drowning out the "let's have fun" portion I just didn't get as much out of it. That said, I though the actors did a good job, especially outdoors (I really wish I had seen the one jumping out at the younger kids but I was facing the wrong direction at the time- apparently their reactions were priceless). Thanks again C & L for paying for that one.

For work, this week was much better than last for the most part. The only work-day that had rain was Friday, but I was able to take a full-day sub job that day instead, bumping my one Friday gig to Saturday- yes, the holiday. Did you all have a happy Martin Luther day? You know, the anniversary of Luther nailing the [Ninety-Five Theses](#) to the church door in 1517 (the doors were popularly used as bulletin boards at that time). Oh, you celebrated a different holiday you say? Well, so did the kids on Friday. Unluckily for the teacher I subbed for, her son got sick on party day so I was the lucky one who got to take the job in her place. It was my favorite grade, 5th, and it was quite easy. The morning consisted of three tests- didn't you hate days like that in school?- split by an hour of gym and music. At least one of the tests was only

spelling, so only two of them were big thinking tests. Of course, I say "at least" for the spelling test as I was a really good speller in school. I suppose for some it may have been just as rough as the other two.

Lunch time, then the kids were back in costume. Did I mention this was the one day of the year 2/3 of the class went home for lunch? All afternoon was party time. There was a costume parade through the neighborhood scheduled as well, but- you know- rain. As a result, the parents came to the school and watched the kids march across the stage instead. Outside of this time the parent volunteers were in charge. They organized the classroom party- the food, games, and whatnot- while I just helped as needed. The kids had a scavenger hunt, played cauldron bowling and a scooter-relay with toilet paper mummy-wrapping, created a haunted story web, felt brains, hearts, and whatnot in a box, jumped for donuts on a string, and had cupcakes and water (where was the punch??). Most of the year in hometown district serving food in classrooms is a big no-no- they even stopped birthday treats last year- but this was one of the few times they still get to eat sweets in class.

Some of the costumes were classic. There were a few wearing ghoulish costumes including the obligatory Scream mask, some costumes of movie/tv characters like Darth Maul, and a few M&M girls, but there were some stand-out ones including a girl with an overturned bowl of spaghetti on her head (represented by white yarn with brown yarn-ball meatballs), another girl who came as a washing machine with her head under a pile of "dirty" clothes on top, and a boy who came as a vending machine. Actually, while original, I'm not sure the last one would have won any awards. The front really did look like a vending machine with real chips, candy bars, and whatnot, but in reality it was what could have been a store demo with straps so he could wear it in front of him. It was apparently heavy too, as he took the elevator upstairs instead of the

stairs. I hope he had permission, but I felt for him so I didn't ask. The washing machine on the other hand was an excellent costume. I already mentioned the pile of clothes to hide her face, but it also came complete with a box of fabric softener and bottle of detergent taped or glued to it. The only thing that would have improved the costume was if the round door in front actually opened revealing more clothes.

So what did I do for halloween? Well, following work on the windy day I... handed out candy. Yep, that was it. I did have a "phantom of the opera" half-mask, so I wore it when I answered the door, but that was pretty much it. We had our usual half-dozen groups of kids come to our door. Seriously, is our house on the sex-offender list or something? Since moving here we have had no more than ten groups of costumed candy-beggars stop by each year. Nothing at all like or previous location across from a school. Oh, well.

We did have a 4th/5th grade church party Friday night, but this post is getting long so I think I will save it for a future church post.