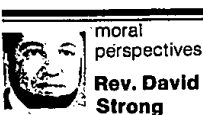


# We can be thankful for feelings shared

Sometimes I am extremely touched by what goes on in the hearts of people. And when they share that heart content with me I feel that I am in the presence of the sacred. After all, what can there be to creation that is more sacred than the content of the human heart?



**Rev. David Strong**

During a philosophy class where I am learning about life with the students I teach, I asked for

## Road fee taxes often losers

It may not be much consolation, but the \$25 road fee that was trenched so badly by Oakland County voters was defeated by even larger margins elsewhere in the state.

Voters in Oakland County voted 4-to-1 on Nov. 8 against the \$25 vehicle registration fee that would have raised \$200 million over 10 years for the county's beleaguered road system.

Other counties that tried similar proposals did even worse.

Registration fees were defeated by 5-to-1 margins in both Eaton County, which is near Lansing, and Tuscola County, which is in the Thumb.

Monroe County voters in northern Michigan defeated a vehicle registration fee by a solid 7-to-1 margin.

In northern Michigan, Alcona County tried for a road millage rather than the registration fee. It lost in the August primary and in the November general election.

"Clearly the voters were rejecting the concept of local funding for road improvements," said John Grubb, managing director of the Oakland County Road Commission.

Grubbs interpreted the results as the voters' message to Lansing. He said voters "don't want the burden for road improvements on our backs," but instead favor a fuel tax increase which he called "the traditional method."

The state legislature and Gov. Blanchard have talked at giving counties the right to levy a local fuel tax. New House Speaker Lewis D. Dak, D-Montrose, has said he is willing to seek a 2-cent-a-gallon hike, but those revenues would go to the state, not the county.

after the class to write them down for me to read.

And so I did. But what I read was so much more than words, more than a stack of index cards with lists of Thanksgiving items.

These were nothing less than the life meanings expressed in simple candor. The items included everything from being grateful for having made it home safe from the Middle East to having a family.

THE ABILITY to learn and grow was right up there with dinner tables and boy friends. Health and friends and good times also made the lists. Some found pleasure in the awareness that they can care and share.

I was struck by those who admitted to family imperfections and national problems without letting such blind them to the good in both. They were not saying that they would be gone. In fact some expressed gratitude to seek things that needed to be changed and for the courage to contribute.

Others were overwhelmed at the growth they have experienced and

the learning of which they have been capable. Some of these are young adults participating in a class with others whose age and experience is more in league with their parents. Both appear grateful for the input of the other.

But beyond the content of their thoughts I stopped and reflected on the weight of the cards in my mind. I had not asked these fellow human beings on the road of life for a buck or five or 10.

I had asked them to share something of themselves and they gave it without hesitation. They not only gave me their thoughts they, perhaps unknowingly, gave me the opportunity to reflect on what a privilege it is to be invited into the heart of another.

This year when I meet with friends to worship and to say thank you to the God of life I'll be thinking of these lives and the many others into whose hearts I am invited on a regular basis. And which of us has not had that experience with a partner, or a friend, or a co-worker, or a neighbor, perhaps a stranger?

WHEN PEOPLE open their mouths, they are more often than not opening their hearts. And open hearts in the ear of another are every bit as vulnerable as an open heart in the hand of a surgeon.

So I can be grateful. Grateful for those who have taught a little more of who I am by sharing with me who they are. And I can be grateful for the many others who listen to what I dare to share myself.

Philosophy classes are not the places where the answers of life are found in neat packages. Rather they are where the questions of life get asked in a way that leads us to dis-

cover the marvels of life as we live it. One of those marvels continues to be the wonder and the meaning that lives in people who reach out and touch us with the stuff of their hearts.

Maybe the items on our list are not nearly as important as the way we read them. It may also be that someone else's list will tell you more about your own than the one you write yourself. That's what happened for me tonight. Thanks.

The Rev. Robert Schaden is a minister at Schoolcraft College's Newman House Campus Ministry in Livonia.

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**Q: What do we mean when we speak of the "holiday blues?"**

**A:** So often in the media, typically around Christmas or Thanksgiving, we notice a feature article that points out a sudden inexplicable outbreak of depression, a precipitous rise in suicide rates or increased domestic conflict. It can shake us profoundly, all the more so because so-called "holiday blues" by definition occur at times when we anticipate contentment and peace.

Essentially, holiday depression can be thought of as a special kind of loneliness which, like separation anxiety, is most common when a person feels uncertain, threatened or hurt. People without emotional partners therefore feel on occasions that celebrate attachments and remind them of what they lack: engagements, weddings, anniversaries, the family hours of early evening and Sunday afternoon and, of course, Christmas and Thanksgiving. Like grief, adult loneliness expresses itself in yearning, not for a lost person but for an unspecified person who might become an emotional partner.

We all suspect that loneliness of any kind is bad for health. Sensible and knowledgeable therapists are able to treat loneliness as a problem in its own right rather than a symptom of more fundamental problems. Consult your psychiatrist or ask your family physician to refer you for further information or treatment.

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