

# Bonfires of the Anxieties

Members of Christ Community Church in Alamogordo, N.M. made news recently by igniting what they called a “holy bonfire.” Pastor Jack Brock urged his flock to burn evil books, such as Harry Potter and Shakespeare. So, they did.

There is something comical about this. I keep seeing this image of a cartoon elephant shrieking at a tiny mouse. The notion that Christianity is really at risk from the likes of a Harry Potter is simply laughable.

But there is also something sad at work here. The idea that incinerating pop fiction somehow fights evil is just tragic.

There is real evil in our world. Not the wispy evil of ghosts and witches, but the tangible evil of violence and poverty. This evil shows up everyday to rob people of life and hope. This is insidious evil, it is epidemic, and our faith should confront it. Instead, we are busy lighting bonfires of our anxieties.

Anxiety is part of the problem. We are anxious that our young people will be bewitched by tales of wizardry. We are anxious that more people go to the movies than attend our prayer services. We are anxious that a rising interest in the occult might somehow overpower the good and evil will win the day.

It is the nagging fear that what we have is not enough, what we do is ineffective and what we believe is fragile and easily lost. In short, we lack confidence in the power of our own faith traditions.

This lack of confidence shows itself in many ways. Consider: Each week, the Bible is read and proclaimed in churches around the country. Nevertheless, some people tell us if the Bible is not on display in the court house square, “God is denied.” That doesn’t say much about the witness of the church, now does it?

How about prayer? Every week, millions of faithful folk gather for worship. Many churches even have midweek services where even more prayers are offered. But

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unless there is prayer in the classroom, “Children are not allowed to pray!”  
Prayers on Sunday don’t count?

It’s almost as if we have forgotten how compelling our faith traditions really are, or what they are capable of doing when lived faithfully. No wonder we are frightened by every mouse of an idea that scampers by.

Faith is a powerful force. It has the power to build and create. Faith, when applied in a positive and healing manner, builds community, creates hope and offers life. An anxious faith cannot build anything. It can only tear things down or burn things up.

Fear and ignorance are dangerous companions. Today they convince us to burn books we think are evil. What will go into the bonfire tomorrow? German poet Heinrich Heine wrote, “Where books are burned, someday people will be burned as well.”

May all of us who have faith in God learn what is truly evil in our world. May we also learn and remember what our faith can do about it. Let’s be sure the poet’s words do not come true again.

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[Order his book \*Bringing God Home: Family Devotions for the Christian Year from Amazon!\*](#)

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