

Stained-glass spirituality: the power of Christ's light

Implementing a Twitter firewall at home is a bit like asking a roommate to hide your Halloween candy.

It is an act of surrender and of conquest. What you lack in self-control you make up for in self-knowledge.

My self-imposed Twitter sabbatical has been a good move, setting my summer on a sunnier course. More than 200 million people use the website, firing off tweets of 140 characters or fewer.

But me?

I'm ready for a break. I'd like to think longer thoughts.

I decided to seize the summer, vowing to replace my aimless web surfing with creative endeavors. Less technology, more art.

On Memorial Day I bought a \$16.95 sketchpad, cringing at the price - no sale, no coupon - while relishing the splurge. The hard, black cover and thick pages dignified my work. Soon I was drawing teacups and peacock feathers, tilting my head and smiling inside.

Later that week I memorized some poetry, which I hadn't done since high school Shakespeare. I've been reciting the verses all summer, and each time it's like unwrapping a Hershey's Kiss.

I assembled my clarinet, read on the porch and journaled my heart out - 103 pages since Memorial Day. It's much more honest when no one else is reading and you're not secretly vying to pick up followers. How often life morphs into a popularity contest - and how often we play along.

But the most formal artistic undertaking of my summer was also the most foreign: taking a stained-glass window class through St. Paul, Minn., community education.

Oh, to be a student again, experiencing that same old arc of emotions that makes you feel so young: thrilled to get an email from the instructor, anxious to depart for the first class, empowered to master a new skill.

I'm one of five students gathering on Monday nights to cut glass and solder lead. One student looks to be 20. Two appear close to 60. And we all look happy to be there. We want to make art.

Before the class began, I'd put a lot of thought into my design, dreaming up intricate patterns and imagining them as birthday gifts. But stained glass is more about skill than artistry.

I like the physicality of it – standing there for three hours, leaning into an oak work bench and hearing the sizzle of severing glass. It is a welcome antidote to a day at the computer, a pleasant switch from head to hands.

I panicked when I cut my longest section of glass and veered off the line. "Life Goes On" was playing in the studio, and Peggy, the student across from me, helped me through it.

When I cut the wrong side of the glass, I beckoned our instructor, Bob. "I think I made a mistake," I told him.

"We don't say that in art," he said.

Later we slid our glass into lead, which made our imperfect pieces fit together perfectly. "It hides a lot of sinning," Bob said.

I thought of 1 Peter 4:8: "Above all let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins."

God is the one who takes all our broken pieces and turns them into art. He is the sunlight that makes our stained glass radiate.

I'm seeing the world in sharper lines and richer hues this summer – and it is one unspoken, unceasing thank you to the creator, who looks at everything he has made and finds it very good.

Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn. She can be reached at www.ReadChristina.com.