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## *The Sweetest Part*

**The Rev. George Maxwell Jr, Vicar**  
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It started the day after the opening of the Cathedral Market. I received a call from a friend telling me how much she enjoyed the roasted chicken she had for lunch on Mothers' Day. The chicken, of course, came from a local grower at the market. It had been raised using humane methods, fed the food that chickens are supposed to eat and spared the extra hormones and antibiotics that growers have to give chickens that aren't. It tasted better and promised to be healthier than most chickens you can buy in a store. And, buying it from the person who raised it meant that my friend knew where it came from, where it had been and how it got there!

Hearing the enthusiasm in her voice, however, made me think again about why I am so excited about the market. Part of it is simple. Food tastes better if you eat it sooner. When you buy something at the market, there is a strong likelihood that it was harvested the day before. When you buy something at the store, it may have spent as much as two weeks in transit. And, of course, when you buy local produce, you know that you are paying for freshness and not a lot of transportation and packaging.

But, there's more. The food is often healthier. If the grower doesn't have to worry about shipping her produce, then she is free to grow a number of different varieties without worrying about whether they can withstand the rigors of shipping or will ripen before reaching the store shelves. This means that she doesn't have to worry about the chemicals and antibiotics that prepare the produce for these challenges.

I also know that we're supporting our local economy. When we buy things grown here, then we are creating jobs here, supporting businesses that pay taxes here and conserving farm land here. Moreover, it is the local food systems "from the farm to the fork, if you will" who are the most committed to sustainable agricultural methods. This is, I think, the way to build healthy community. As Wendell Berry says in his essay, *The Art of the Commonplace*, "The earth is what we all have in common" it is impossible to care for each other more or differently than we care for the earth."

There's something else, though. I'm a little hesitant to even mention it. But, sometimes, I think the sweetest part is that we get to do all of these good things and have fun too! Usually, doing right is, well, harder. There's the inevitable denial and the unwanted suffering and the angry opposition. You know what they say, grace is free, but it's rarely cheap. It's just not that often that you can wander over to the church on a Saturday morning, see your friends and neighbors, treat yourself to wonderful food and make the world a better place, all at the same time.

It just feels like another one of those times when life is not giving me what I deserve, thank God!

"The Rev. George Maxwell Jr, Vicar