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## *Spirituality or Church on Sunday Morning?*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Very Reverend Sam G. Candler**

As many of you know, I was not at church last Sunday. I have been away on study leave, and my time has been soundly rejuvenating. As most of you also know, I actually like attending church even when I am away from the Cathedral. I learn new things in new worship experiences. I meet new people. I appreciate the Cathedral more! However, last Sunday, without a church to attend, I found myself, strangely, without a routine. What was I to do? Was there even a reason to dress nicely? Maybe I would actually read a newspaper in the morning.

I turned on the radio. When I did, I felt like I was a stranger in someone else's world. I realized that I have no idea what radio stations broadcast on Sunday mornings. I knew that most of the religious programming would be foreign to me, though a couple of radio preachers did present some inspirational points. And, of course, the sports programming was in its usual hyperactive mode. (Why does sports radio always sound like those obnoxious horns at the World Cup soccer games? Always one droning decibel level. Always loud. Always exhausting.)

But the strangest radio world I encountered on Sunday morning was the world of public radio. Like many Episcopalians, I actually listen enough to public radio to know its general schedules. Daily, I know when the news programs stop, when the music shows begin, which interview shows or variety shows appear on which days.

But on Sunday morning, I was clueless. There was Garrison Keillor, for instance, whose delightful Saturday evening show was being rebroadcast on Sunday morning! And there was the weekend news show, with its interspersed special reports, all much more laid-back than they are on weekdays.

As I listened to Sunday morning shows, I realized how often the producers were appealing to religious and spiritual sentiment. There was an interview with two rabbis, a husband and wife, who were talking about how to raise children. Of course, I already knew that Garrison Keillor appeals to religious interests; his remarks are a sermon in themselves. (I have sometimes regarded his Saturday show as my own sermonic substance for the week, if I am to preach the following day.)

Now, appealing to religious and spiritual sentiment on Sunday morning must certainly be a good thing. Better religion than something else, right? But it struck me that the people listening to this religious sentiment on Sunday morning "people like me last Sunday" were not actually in church! They were listening somewhere else (unless they had snuck their radios into church!). If religion and spirituality are so appealing, why don't these people go to church?

The radio show then interviewed a blues-rock-gospel singer, whose band actually played a great song in the public radio studio. The song was "I Still Belong to Jesus," and I loved the song. In fact, the young singer praised his father for having forced him to attend church when he was younger.

But on this Sunday morning, the singer was not in church. He was performing in a public radio studio, singing about Jesus to people like me who were also not in church. It was a strange world I was tuning into on Sunday morning. Producers were trying to keep spiritual and religious traditions alive for people who were not actually attending church. Next Sunday, I will be back in church.

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