A Peanuts cartoon shows Peppermint Patty in a conversation with Charlie Brown. She said, “Guess what, Chuck. The first day of school and I got sent to the principal’s office. It was your fault, Chuck.”

“My fault? How could it be my fault? Why do you say everything is my fault?

She said, “You’re my friend, aren’t you, Chuck. You should have been a better influence on me.”

Even though Patty is throwing blame around here, she does have a little bit of a point. We do influence our friends. We at St Johns or St Andrews influence the rest of our community and we are called to be an influence in the world for good – to influence the world in the way of Christ. We are called to be the salt of the earth – the flavor of life, the cleansing force, the healing balm, the preservative that gives life.

Our community at St John’s or St Andrews is called to be part of the earthly life of Wilson or Ransomville or Cambria Newfane, or Lockport and all the areas where our influence extends – the earth and its everyday life. But we are called to be the main ingredient of that life – the salt. As small and unassuming as salt is, it has enormous power and influence.

In ancient times, one use of salt was as a preservative of meat. Without it, meat would spoil and cause disease and death. Without the love and peace of Christ, which we at St Johns/St Andrews sprinkle on the surrounding community, that community would cease to have spiritual life. We would cease to have spiritual life, too, because salt that just lays out on the shelf – exposed to the elements-- eventually will lose its flavor and become just like any dust – useless and trampled upon. If we don’t sprinkle our salt freely upon the world, we’ll lose that specialness.

In ancient times, salt also was used to season all meat sacrifices offered to the Lord, thus it is also associated with cleansing and purification. That means that our ministry as the “salt of the earth” may sometimes involve cleansing the area around us. In ancient times and now, salt had some antiseptic properties, important for life but not always pleasant to undertake at the time. According to Donald Bloesch in the Theological Notebook, “We are called to be not the honey of the world, but the salt of the earth. Salt stings on an open wound, but it also saves one from gangrene.”

Once again, we hear Jesus calling our Christian community to sometimes go against what society does if it conflicts with the words of Christ – to push society into doing what is right for its own good, even if it hurts, as well as for the good of the Kingdom of God.

In Biblical times, the expression “to eat salt” with someone meant to share in his or her hospitality. It also incurred an obligation to look after the host’s interest. A covenant of salt was a covenant of perpetual obligation – newborn babies were rubbed with salt. As the salt of the earth and a covenant people, we are called to look out for our world, but with the knowledge that the only way our world can be saved is through Jesus. With that knowledge we are called to be in relationship with our local community and to bring our local community into covenant with Christ.

In ancient times and today, salt also provides the difference between bland food and food that has a little flavor. We provide the flavor of Christ to the world.

In his book, *Led by the Carpenter*, D James Kennedy tells this story:

A man walked into a small grocery store and asked, "Do you sell salt?"

"Ha!" said Pop the proprietor. "Do we sell salt! Just look!" And Pop showed the customer one entire wall of shelves stocked with nothing but salt --Morton salt, iodized salt, kosher salt, sea salt, rock salt, garlic salt, seasoning salt, Epsom salts --every kind of salt imaginable.

"Wow!" said the customer.

"You think that's something?" said Pop with a wave of his hand. "That's nothing! Come look." And Pop led the customer to a back room filled with shelves and bins and cartons and barrels and boxes of salt. "Do we sell salt!" he said.

"Unbelievable!" said the customer.

"You think that's something?" said Pop. "Come! I'll show you salt!" And Pop led the customer down some steps into a huge basement, five times as large as the previous room, filled wall, floor, to ceiling, with every imaginable form and size and shape of salt -- even huge ten-pound salt licks for the cow pasture.

"Incredible!" said the customer. "You really do sell salt!"

"No!" said Pop. "That's just the problem! We never sell salt! But that salt salesman --Hoo-boy! Does *he* sell salt!"

Salt that stays on the shelf doesn't do any good at all.

As Christians we need to influence the world. Let us sprinkle – and even pour – the healing, cleansing, flavoring, life-giving salt of Christ onto the world.

Amen