

This is Lieutenant Roger McCort of The Salvation Army in Eureka with today's Community Comment.

As you hear this, my family is celebrating the end of our first year in Eureka. Previous to living here we spent two years in Los Angeles and before that nine in San Francisco.

Pastors in The Salvation Army don't choose where we live. We volunteer for this gig knowing that people higher up the chain of command will move us to different appointments depending on where our individual skills are needed, which might mean living in an area we've always wanted to be in or it might mean living somewhere that we need to learn to love – or at least tolerate until the next move comes along. As we've been here, the question people seem compelled to ask is this: "Don't you miss living in the city?"

To be completely honest about it, living in Northern California, away from the skyscrapers and traffic and noise? I've rarely been so grateful to be anywhere as I am to be here.

For those who have lived in this area for any period of time, that probably comes as no surprise. Especially not as we begin to celebrate summer behind the redwood curtain. The warmer, drier days of the next few months make the siren song of God's glorious creation all the louder in our ears, calling us to get up out of our seats and head outside into the natural wonders which surround us.

If you're sitting around your office or your house, wishing you could do something other than file this month's financials or mow the back lawn, then just drop everything and head out into one of our many state or national park areas and spend some time among the giants which surround us. We live in the middle of the most impressive forest on the planet! Thankfully, many old-growth groves have been preserved and ways made for us to visit them without disturbing or destroying the underlying ecosystem. Two or three hours spent in the shadows of mighty coastal redwoods doesn't just exercise your body – it actually can soothe your soul, especially if you go slow and easy and really take in the beauty and immensity of it all.

If you prefer full sun to shaded paradise, our coastline is studded with perfect beaches for any preference. From tidepooling in Trinidad to surfing on Samoa to lunching on the Lost Coast, oceanside experiences abound! Rockhounds scavenge at Fort Bragg and Agate Beach while modern prospectors search out the shiny flakes left behind by old timers at Gold Bluffs or other sites popular since the gold rush days.

If you prefer to find living treasures to inert ones, there's plenty of opportunity for that as well. Whales are more common during peak migration seasons, but there is always a chance of seeing one if you keep your eyes open and fixed towards the ocean. Dolphins, seals, sea lions and other large ocean life have all been known to make appearances here too. Inland you'll find elk, deer, and even bears, if you look in the right places. We have enough different varieties of birds to keep an ornithologist busy for a dozen lifetimes and enough skunks to keep large stretches of highway unbearably odoriferous for even longer.

In short, the only reason someone wouldn't love and prefer northern California to a more urban setting is if they can't or won't take advantage of the amazing area we are blessed to live in. I hope that you find the same kind of joy in it that I do.

Grace and peace to you. This has been Lt. Roger McCort for today's KINS Community Comment.