
From the Pastor's Desk

Pastor Gerald (Jerry) Morris

April 2017

On Change

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed.

I am not great at dealing with change. When we got the word of my reappointment to Eau Claire, expected though that word was, it sent me into a fit of resistance. I didn't want to sell the house I've spent so much time on (This year the grape vine would finally be big enough to shade the whole pergola!), I didn't want to leave the city I'd come to know so well, and I didn't want to leave you. Rebecca, knowing me, bit her tongue and let me process my own grief in my own snail-like way. A part of my resistance, of course, wasn't mourning what I was leaving but anxiety about what I would be facing. While everything that I know about the city of Eau Claire and Lake Street United Methodist Church is positive, I don't know a whole lot. What will our new home be like? What about the church? Will the committees all work together well, the way they do here?

It is ironic, of course, that I should struggle with the prospect of change, because change is actually my job. It is the task of the church to be a part Christ's work in transforming lives, and it is my job as the leader of a church to clear the ground and prepare the way for such change. It is my calling to remind people that we are incomplete, on a journey, growing, and then to offer them opportunities to grow and change. So for me to resist change smacks of rank hypocrisy.

I'm doing better now. I'll miss the people of this church, but people are fascinating everywhere, and there will be new friends and challenges in those I meet. I may find some problems at Lake Street that I didn't have to deal with here, but I may discover

wonderful things there that I'd never imagined. I may like our new home more – indeed, I will almost certainly like some things about it much more – and I can jolly well plant a new grape vine.

You too. As I write this, we don't know who your new pastor will be, but here's what I'm sure of: that new pastor will do some things better than I do. I can say that with confidence, sight unseen, because I am well aware of how many things I don't do very well. (If you aren't aware of these weaknesses, good. That means I've hidden them well, and I'm not about to tell you at this point.) Your job, when the new pastor arrives, is to look for those things first, for the unexpected gifts that bring a breath of fresh air.

Most of our growth comes in times of disequilibrium, when our comfort level has been shaken, and we are forced by circumstances to examine our lives and rethink our presuppositions. This is the wisdom behind the United Methodist appointment system: systematic, regular, enforced disequilibrium, but without chaos. The next years are times of huge potential for you.

After all, the Christian faith is all about change as well. The central feast that we celebrate this month, Easter, is a commemoration of the day when sin was forgiven and death was transformed to life. Paul went out preaching to the Gentiles not because he had a new philosophy but because he himself had been transformed. The church has always been about transformation.

Good things are coming. He is risen. He is risen indeed.