
From the Pastor's Desk

Pastor Gerald (Jerry) Morris

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Sorting

It's been a long time since Rebecca and I moved. Now, Rebecca's by nature pretty good at getting rid of things that we don't use. Packrat she is not. But over 17 years, things have slipped under even her radar. So now we're getting rid of a lot. For instance, about a quarter of the books in my office are going to the library book sale. Here are the criteria I'm using: (1) if I haven't read it, can I imagine ever doing so? (2) if I have read it, was it worth the time? and (3) even if it was worth the time when I first read it, can I imagine ever wanting to look at it again, for any reason? If the answer to any of these questions is "no," then out it goes. In other words: Is this something I've kept because it matters, or is this something I've kept out of habit?

I keep thinking that it would have been great if we had been more rigorous about sorting our possessions along the way. It would certainly make the moving process easier. But I also know that would never have happened. You see, two years ago, looking at the unwanted books on my shelf, my choice was: "Do I want to go to the trouble to get rid of this or should I just let it sit there?" Given that choice, leaving it untouched is way easier. Today, though, the choice is, "Do I want to get rid of this book or do I want to pack it in a box, load it in a truck, then unload it on the other end, unpack it, and replace it on a shelf?"

When faced with the necessary turmoil of change, suddenly hanging on to a book that I will never look at feels like a terrible idea.

This is why change is good, painful as it is. It takes away the easy option of “Oh, just let it slide a while longer” and forces us to reexamine our lives. Every now and then, we need to ask ourselves how much of what we have is really important and how much has just been too much bother to get rid of.

This congregation is entering a time of transition, too. As you will have heard by now, in July you will welcome a new pastor, Jayneann McIntosh. One of the first things that many of you will notice about Jayneann is that she is not Jerry Morris. In fact, to the best of my knowledge, she has never had the slightest desire to be Jerry Morris. (This is a good thing, by the way. All the smartest people I know don't want to be Jerry Morris.)

But what this does mean is that Jayneann will be, yes, different. She will represent change. There is no way that a pastoral transition can take place without disruption, and our first response to difference, change, and disruption is generally to resist it. Before you do that, here is my challenge to you: Ask yourself these questions: (1) this thing that has been changed, is it something that I had ever noticed before? (2) if I had noticed it, was it something that was genuinely meaningful to me? and (3) even if I found it meaningful, is it something I really believe has to be done that way forever? If the answer to any of these three questions is “no,” then let it go. Simply: Is this something we have done this way because it matters, or is this something we have done this way out of habit?

So I'm still sorting my stuff. Some of it I will want to keep. Some I hadn't thought about in years, but now that I'm thinking about it, I realize isn't worth keeping. Sorting is a good thing, wouldn't you say?