

The Pastor's Report

Greetings, friends and fellow travelers!

I begin this month with a HUGE thank you to everyone for the grace, patience, and forbearance shown to me these past three weeks while I have been (mostly) away from the church. Amazingly, everything kept chugging along as we all knew it would. Momentum and a clear path are wonderful things.

I won't kid you, the fabulously warm and sunny weather we experienced in September was a real boon (and *thoroughly* enjoyed) as I endeavored to catch my breath, clear my head, and regain perspective. I was also able to undertake many long-overdue tasks and projects at the cottage resulting in a great sense of accomplishment (whew!). Through it all, I continued to ponder, observe, and contemplate our life together as a church.

What I determined, and find *utterly* amazing, is that it is ALL happening All the time. While this may be self-evident it is, nevertheless, remarkable. Babies are being born (with more on the way), folks are making changes and gaining ground, relationships are forming and deepening, "A-Ha" moments are given and received as gifts, challenges and struggles are being met, support and assistance are offered and welcomed, conversations are taking place, kids are exploring, growing and reshaping our worlds, sorrows are being borne, labors undertaken, folks are caring for their parents as they age and die, and all the while fun is being had, life is being enjoyed, and our hearts swell with a love which abounds and surrounds us all.



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All of this has left me hopeful, expectant, and energized; personally and professionally (no small feat given the length of my tenure, I can assure you). I am left to wonder what is next for our church, and for the life Linda and I share with all of you and each of you? Who else is on their way to us, and thereby change us and, eventually, become us? What is the nature of the good things we, as a church, can bring to this world and our community? What will be required of us? How will we build upon both what has been given to us, and what we have already accomplished? In other words, where is God leading us, and of what will be the journey upon which we have, even now, embarked? Though much has yet to be discovered, explored, and written, it is my *deeply* held belief that *great* joy awaits us all, and is also already upon us.

All of that being said, please believe me when I tell you that I am no Pollyanna. One of the greatest "gifts" a long-term pastorate has to offer is the realization that life is *profound* struggle...for EVERYBODY. Certainly in the great, Job-like woes which are visited upon us all, but also in the trials and tribulations of everyday life. It is incredibly easy to get overwhelmed, discouraged, and disheartened. That is where the church, this church, *your* church comes into. Let us help, open yourself to receiving the help, then be the help. Repeat, rejoice, remember you are loved. Like that.

Work hard, stay strong, and keep your head up. - Rev. Mike

"In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps." - Proverbs 16:9