

# The Pastor's Report

Welcome to it Sisters and Brothers,

I begin this month with a rather banal thought that popped into my brain this past week. One which marked a moment which caused me to look down at my feet and realize I have moved past some imaginary line in the sand that is my life.

Though you may be unaware, there is an effort afoot this spring to clear out the basement under the sanctuary (what some who are newer to the church have dubbed the "scary basement"). Doug Wingerath has been leading this charge and to him great thanks is owed for his leadership and efforts. Most of us have such places in our own homes which become "out of sight, out of mind." Places where the past is stored, ignored, or archived for future generations. Or, alternatively, the place where things simply "end up" as it is the easiest choice to make at that particular moment. All of which is fine, and as it happens to be.

There are many ways to gauge the general health and direction of a congregation. Worship attendance, financial contributions, mission giving, church school attendance, and the vigor of the committee structure immediately leap to mind as some of the more obvious objective indicators. Others, though, are more subtle but equally as telling. Our spring and fall rummage sales would fit into this category. The quality and quantity of the rummage, year after year, is noteworthy. While there will always be a core group of workers, are there different folks and new faces beyond these who also show up to fold, sort, and clean up? Is the underlying purpose of the sale to primarily make money, or is it to get much needed clothing and household items into the hands of those who would benefit most from them? Of course, the real measure of such an event is the fun that is had, the fel-

lowship that is shared, and the spirits that are lifted. It is my personal opinion that ours is a robust and healthy congregation based on the "Rummage Sale Test."

Another important indicator as to if a congregation is leaning into its future or stuck in its past are the storage spaces of any church. One of the things I advise ministers looking for a new church is to open up the closets and take a look, and/or go check out the basement. These places will really tell the tale. Are they time capsules or engaged spaces? Messy and cluttered, or organized and accessible? Moreover, I can pretty much guarantee that when a congregation is most concerned with survival, it isn't spending time and energy cleaning out the basement. That the current effort to do so is underway is an enormous "green flag" as to the health and vigor of our congregation.

With this on my mind this week, I remembered years ago I purchased an electric powered hedge trimmer for the church which I would use every summer to shape the bushes; storing it in the basement when not in use. While I can picture the actual trimmer in my mind, I admit I have NO recollection of where those bushes were located. If some of you "old timers" out there care to scratch this intellectual itch for me it would be appreciated (I am thinking where Rosemary's Garden is now, and perhaps along the other side of the walk next to the church, and maybe in front of the church?).

Bottom line, I have now been here long enough that I'm forgetting what I had once done. That has to be a "thing." The meaning behind it, though, I have yet to conclude. Sorry, no deeper lesson at this point. Just sharing this recent "Huh?!?" moment with you. - Mr. Forgetful

"Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old.  
Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? - Isaiah 43:18-19