

Farewell Sermon – August 21, 2016

Ecclesiastics 3 (selected verses) and Colossians 2:1-7

Theme – All is well that ends well

I accepted a call to serve a two year interim position in 2014. Prior to my arrival, Bryan Wilson had secured an apartment for us. For some reason I had cause to change from the basement apartment to the third. Gerry, Marvin, Wayne and Mike helped me move furniture, Chess helped me do the cleaning, Brenda helped me to get a family doctor, and Cathy helped me get Alberta Licenses and other household services.

A Service of Worship and Covenanting between the Sunnybrook Pastoral Charge, me and the Red Deer Presbytery was held on Sunday, January 18, 2015. In the last two years, we have journeyed together, and we have seen God at work. Jinah and I are sincerely thankful to all of you who did many other services to get us settled. But the time has come to move on in my pastoral ministry.

On June 24 there was a special farewell gathering at which two of our children, a granddaughter and friends were present. We enjoyed delicious food, had wonderful conversation and many people spoke well of our time together. In showing appreciation a special donation was raised. Since then, we have prayed, hugged each other, and many times one or the other of us has said, “This isn’t goodbye.” We mean, “This isn’t the end.” “I count on seeing you again.” And, “I won’t forget you.” In fact some members who had lived or visited the area I’m going have indicated visiting me once in a while during summers. So we say, “This isn’t goodbye.”

Goodbyes are hard but it can also be great hope. Three lessons we learn. First, saying goodbye means appreciating our past relationship. Second, saying goodbye means we accept God’s leading above our own desires. Third, saying goodbye means we carefully prepare for the future.

Ministry of whatever kind is a daunting task, making someone feel slightly frightened or worried about your ability to achieve something. At transition and Council meetings there were times we were faced with hard and confidential issues but diligently dealt with them with honour and respect. Sometimes I was the teacher and you were the learners but there were many times also you were my teacher, and I had to learn from you too.

The story of Elijah and Elisha in 1 Kings 2:1-17 reminds us of a particular time when Elijah and Elisha were together, and a particular time when they were separated, but with the presence of God, ministry continued with Elisha and with the people. The stories of the past, for us today, become encouragement of the present. My hope is that you would continue to grow in knowledge of God, in knowledge of Scripture, in knowledge of yourselves and one another—in the kind of knowledge that becomes wisdom, so that you will live lives that please God and bless others.

In January 2016, the JNAC was approved and the process of searching for a new minister started. On the recommendation of the Joint Search Committee, a candidate's name was approved by the congregation and expected to start soon. "All is well that ends well" means that even though a situation may have been chaotic; the message for us at Sunnybrook is that "all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28) (NRSV)

Let me admit whatever achievements we've made is the concerted effort of every individual member, including the Transition Team, the committees, the council, the staff and the retired ministers. Thank you for supporting the completion of the Methodist school in my community in Sierra Leone. As I take my exit, I encourage you all to pray for me and for each other, so that we may bear fruit in every good work and as we grow in the knowledge of God. In Jesus Name we pray. Amen.