

May 21, 2017

## **“A Time to be Thankful and Celebrate”**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, John 14:15-21**

It was at the trustees meeting on September 10, 2014. One of the trustees brought a letter with a real estate estimate of the value of the former parsonage at 8 Brewster Lane with comp prices of the houses in that area. Reading the letter, another trustee said, “Let’s sell the parsonage.”

That’s how the exploration to sell the former parsonage and to purchase a new one started. I know that the idea of selling the former parsonage and of purchasing another was not anything new. In fact, someone told me that it has been discussed from time to time for the last 15 years.

However, now time was ripe. The real estate value was good. We were blessed with good leadership from the trustees, the council and the congregation. We all worked towards a common goal - the best interests for the future of this congregation.

The road hasn’t been easy. Those who have been involved along the way know that there have been many challenges. There was a moment when someone wanted to call it “quits.” We had to follow the procedures of the United Methodist Church, which has made each process a little bit longer, to say the least.

As we moved from exploration to action, the leaders of this congregation and I have tried to bring everyone on board, answering questions, preparing documents to back up what we proposed, and keeping everyone informed of what was happening. We have moved together.

When we get involved in what we are doing so intensely, sometimes we forget why we are doing what we are doing -the purpose of what we are doing. This reminds me of a story you may have heard before.

A man once walked by a building site and saw three stone masons side by side, sweating over their work in the hot sun.

He asked the first, "What are you doing?"

"Laying bricks" came the reply.

He asked the second stone mason, "And what are you doing?"

"Building a wall." came the reply.

Then he asked the third mason, "And what is it you are doing?"

"I am raising a great cathedral."

I hope and pray that as we serve within and beyond our church, we may remind ourselves that we are serving the Lord, who has given us life, died for us on the cross and called us to be the church, his body in this world.

That brings us back to our mission statement. Why we exist as the church, why we are here as Bellport United Methodist Church. Let's see our mission statement again. (p.p. I read first.)

We are called, as disciples, to experience Christ's love for us and to embody God's love in the world.

Would you please join me in reading this mission statement?

Now it's time to thank all the people who have worked together for the sale and purchase of the parsonage. First our church leaders and I would like to thank you all for having come to the two Open meetings we had after service in 2015 and to the three charge conferences in 2016 to cast your vote. Without your votes, we wouldn't be here today.

I would like to recognize our leaders. When I call your name, would you please stand up and stay standing until I finish calling everyone? Trustee chair, Scott, vice chair, Blake and the rest of the trustees. Parsonage Task Force members from the Council- Rita, Mike and Carolyn. The rest of the council members who have walked with us. Erna, would you please stand up, representing the agency, which introduced to us the new owner for 8 Brewster Lane and kept him until the end? Let's give them our heart-felt thanks with a round of applause. (clapping)

And Joan and Ed, thank you for having been so patient with our church procedures and giving your lovely home to us.

Now, let's give thanks to God, who has been with us in our ups and downs in our past. As Ecclesiastes says, "There's a season for everything." Thanks be to God, who has given us a time to sell, a time to purchase, a time to toil and a time to celebrate. Let's give thanks to God, by saying, "Alleluia." Amen.