

We fight change because it's new and uncomfortable for us. We like our comfort zone. We like the safe feeling we get from having things stay the same. Same is predictable. Same is constant. Same is known. The unknown is what we fear. The unknown is a surprise. Unknown is not predictable, it's not constant. It keeps us on our toes.

Now, some change is not good. The weather changing from fall to winter for some of us is not good. Having a change in health may not be good. Change in job location may not be good (further commute, smaller office..) the change of losing our job is not good. There are many changes that we should not embrace. There are changes that cause bigger problems in life.

But then there is change that in the end has some good outcomes. There are those changes that we go through that at first seem difficult, but they end up bringing us blessings beyond our imagination. Getting a higher position in our job at first causes a lot of stress (have to learn new things, get acquainted with new people...) but once we get through those first few months the job becomes a bit of a blessing. Having a change in weekend plans at first may upset us for we wanted to go to this event or that movie, but our plan B may prove to be much more fun for us.

Churches tend to fight change, almost all types of change that might come. Two churches struggling to stay open would benefit from a merger but those two churches will fight that merger. They will fight it until they die. You see, if they had embraced the change and combined resources and worshiped in one building they would be a thriving congregation and they would have more helping hands and more finances to work with. A group in a church that wants to do a more modern worship service before or after the regular service will meet resistance. Those who want to hold on to what is, do not want what is unknown. They will fight the service, even though it would not impact them at all. The service would potentially increase membership. And yet there will be some who will fight the change. And so opportunities to grow God's kingdom, and add not only people but also programs to the church, are lost. So why am I reflecting on change? Because we, as a church, need to realize that there will be and are changes coming. General Conference will be meeting Feb. 23-26 to decide where the United Methodist church will land on the subject of same sex marriage. Whatever their decision, there will be change. We may have to change. We may find that what conference decides is not the path we want to follow. And if that is the case, we will change. And that will be ok. My goal at that point in time (if it comes) will be to guide you through that process as easy as possible. There will be some bumps along the way but once the dust settles you will find that we survived and maybe became stronger.

But there are other changes we should at least think about. Our building is not a welcoming building to many people. Yes WE as a congregation are welcoming but our building is not. You may not realize it but our building keeps people out who may want to join us. If a person can't navigate stairs they can't come in. Sure they can come up to the sanctuary but if they needed to go to the restroom they could not. I've seen this first hand. We had a couple come once who were elderly, and the husband had a horrible time with steps. He had to go to the restroom and he and his wife stayed downstairs the rest of the service because he could not go up and down the steps. A grandfather was almost unable to see his granddaughter get married. He was wheelchair bound and could not get into the chair lift. It took the groomsmen carrying the chair, with him in it, up the stairs. There are a few of you who want to invite a family member or individual to church but cannot. If someone in the family is wheel chair bound, or they can't do steps and need the restroom, they can't get to the Fellowship Hall. And so you don't invite them to church.

Our sanctuary is outdated. There really is a good bit of potential in how we work the sanctuary if we take a few moments to be a bit creative. We might find some ways to have better flow in our sanctuary, so that when we have those services where everything is going on (choir, bells, communion...) we would have the room to do this. And we could have some creative worship services also. If we reworked the worship area just a bit, we could have great ways to store things. We could find a better place for our "prayer ground" table. The options are limited only by our imagination.

To have our building serve as many people as possible, there will be change. And yes, it might hurt a bit to go through change. We know change is not easy, even if it is a change that brings blessings. Now, I am not saying we are changing things right away. But we need to think about change. What can we do to make our church open to ALL people. What can we do to make worship fantastic? What can we do to bring our worship space up to date? If we don't start to think about changing, we will find that time has moved on and we have been left behind. We will find that if we spend our time fighting change, we will miss opportunities to make disciples and grow God's kingdom. We will find that we missed out on many blessings.

I encourage you to ask God to guide us as we go through a possible change with our denomination. Ask God to give us wisdom to follow his path and give us peace if we find we have to change. I also encourage you to think of small things we can change in order to be more current with the times. I encourage you to think about how we can be a church that says, by the way our building looks, that we are open to all people.

May God bless you in all that you do

*Pastor Sharon*