

## **Pastor's Letter – June, 2014**

I've sat in a lot of meetings lately. Some of these meetings are actually called "meetings." Others are known by other names: "conferences", "assemblies", "retreats" and occasionally..."lunches"! But you can't fool me: they're all meetings. "A meeting by any other name is still a meeting."

Meetings are occasions when people...uh...meet. Most meetings I attend don't involve lots of people – maybe a dozen folks...often less. But even gatherings that are small in number can feel very...full. And I think that's because we folks bring much more than just our bodies and perhaps a coat and a set of keys to any meeting. We bring a host of other things too: our opinions, our experience, our tastes, our hurts, our hopes, and our beliefs – among others.

Preparing lunch in the East Bloomfield Fire Hall has reminded me of both the challenge and the miracle of meeting- meeting for a common goal. Even a task as simple as washing dishes can generate a host of "visions" as to how to **DO** it. And the challenge is how to settle on one method. Honoring the democratic spirit, there is a need for respectful listening and open sharing. It is true that dictatorships are vastly more efficient...but they don't make for a lot of "buy-in" and even LESS good will. So...we need to talk things out. I'm happy to report that whether the issue has been dish-washing or serving food or cleaning up, a consensus has generally emerged.

God can be sneaky in teaching us to grow! For example, I think God invented hunger in order to train us! When it comes down to it, we're not so different from laboratory rats, who will go to great lengths to hit the little metal bar in order to receive their food pellet. We will work very hard to feed ourselves...and others. And we think the "outcome" - the meal - is the most important thing. But in fact, the process...the experience of working together and growing together as we blend our gifts and accept our limits...is the REAL pay-off.

A case in point: I've washed dishes for years...almost daily! And my method seems to work very well for me. (If it didn't, I'd change it.) But you...have a different system – one that has worked for YOU. Therein lies the rub...or the scrub. As we work together – on the dishes, on a playground, on a mission project, in a discussion group – I am continually invited to see the imprint of Christ in YOUR vision, your method...and vice versa. And all are enriched.

"Meetings" is such a commonplace word that it may have lost its deeper meaning. To truly meet - encountering one another in all of our wonderful, vexing uniqueness - requires utmost respect, courage, and faith - faith in the God who is forever present "wherever 2 or 3 are gathered." May we all be blessed in our meetings!

In gratitude – Tim