

## **Pastor's Letter – February, 2016**

I live only 6.6 miles from one of the fanciest ski resorts in Western New York. But about one mile CLOSER to me is a lesser known resort that boasts nearly as much fun, for those of a particular “bent” of mind, and without the 60 dollar lift ticket. This alternative destination – what might be named the “Last Resort” - is known as the South Bristol Dump. I believe the politically correct name is the “South Bristol Transfer Station.”

A lot of stuff gets “transferred” there. When I visit, I tend to traffic most in recyclable bottles and cans. These are generally pretty uninspiring commodities, though I’m quite happy to be rid of them. However, once in a while, the South Bristol Transfer Station (SBTS) inherits some very interesting artifacts of our ever-transferring society.

Recently, there was a lovely “spring-chair” unceremoniously dumped into one of the large scrap metal bins. Pulling aside the shards of metal roofing and a deceased window frame that covered this precious find, it was possible to salvage this “vintage” patio chair and bring it home. You may ask “why?” And I have to confess that the question occurred to me, too! Coated with lead-based paint with a couple of bolts missing, this was certainly nothing that Martha Stewart would feature on the cover of Living Magazine.

But there was something both endearing and impressive about this chair that prompted the rescue. For one thing, with very little effort, it bounces! So it offers entertainment with minimal effort. Always an attractive equation! Second, this chair is unique. “You just don’t find that kind of thing anymore.” I doubt it’s for sale at Walmart or Lowes or Runnings. Even on the Internet, I found very few chairs anything like this one. And lastly, here was an opportunity to pull something from the brink of compaction...and put it to use.

There’s no question about it: this chair is proving to be a lot of work. It’s no small task to scrape off paint that has probably clung to the metal longer than I have clung to Earth. New hardware is needed, of course. And then there’s the whole process of painting. On one level, I can understand why someone tossed the chair. From a simple “cost-benefits” perspective, this might be considered a total waste of time. So why do I do it? Maybe my real, deep-seated motivation for taking it on in the first place has to do with my sense that “value” is often misjudged. Chairs are misjudged. People are misjudged, too. Too easily discarded. Too easily “transferred.”

I think I identify with the chair. I’m certainly not looking the way I did when I “came off the line.” Most of us aren’t. I like to think that we can be cherished even so - maybe even more so for having been well seasoned. Perhaps we can start describing one another as “vintage”, “timeless” or even “classic.” I like to think that we all have a bit more “bounce” left in us. Finally, there’s something attractive about putting the time and effort into something seen as peripheral or, worse yet, expendable...and making it shine.

You knew I’d get religious at some point. So here goes: Suffice it to say that Jesus Christ was forever “dumpster diving” into that vast bin of discarded humanity and pulling out some gems: renewing their bounce (remember the cripple who sprang to his feet and danced off into a brighter tomorrow?) and restoring them to their rightful place in community. No rust, dents, cracks or breaks can prevent the redemptive power of God. I’m counting on it.

God bless you all. And happy diving!

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