

**Luke 12:28 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith!**

What does the future hold? Ever see “Back To The Future?” If a movie’s premise is a reflection of people’s attitudes, there is a curiosity and hope to control that future. We learn the future is more easily damaged than managed. Future is the ghost of the unknown. I have always loved Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carole” where the Ghost of Christmas Future looks like the grim reaper; a startling contrast to the more robust and lively Ghosts of the Christmases Past and Present. Maybe that is Dickens’ point; there is a singular future for humanity EXCEPT for when Christmas is lived and made part of us. We have a grim fear of the future and act accordingly.

What is the future for Faith United? It holds all the uncertainty that Marty McFly thought he could manipulate with that gaming book where he figured he could change his present...only, that got messed up, didn’t it? It may be best to admit we cannot know what we do not know. We could, however, be bold in believing that God is calling us into a future where FAITH makes anything possible. Contrary to Luke, we must NOT be of “little faith.”

There are a couple things I have prayed WE might do. First, that whatever future is chosen it is a decision of the whole community. To that end, we are using May 6th as a “Congregational Town Hall” Worship Service at our usual 9:00 AM. This means your voice and thoughts will be heard if you come. This service will be in the Fellowship Hall. (For those with mobility issues, please use the parking in the back so ramp access is available to attend. Others—please reserve that parking for these brothers and sisters.)

Secondly, we can think about “our past.” When I came, I heard much of the long call process that happened before I came. This affected me and how I think about Faith. The baby-boomer pastors are all coming to retirement. Fewer people are entering ministry. This means the existing procedure of calling a pastor will likely have FEWER candidates and take longer. BUT...and it’s a BIG but, it’s a familiar process. We have a past where we know how it works—a Call Committee is formed, profile papers are submitted to the Synod, the Synod sends out people to talk to the church, and then MOST everyone knows nothing until a person appears that has been vetted by the Committee and then Council. Most of you are finally involved in a decision based on maybe a “meet and greet” and a single sermon and worship. It can be frustrating, but you know “sort of” what to expect. [Now, a variation on this idea is becoming a multipoint parish where ONE Pastor serves two (2) or more churches...and we have Bergstrasse and Holy Trinity, Ephrata looking for Pastors now also. That is a consideration.]

Thirdly, the dreaded “M” word. The church might merge. My first thought is to say, “Yeah that is vaguely possible, but it’s HIGHLY improbable” when you think about with whom Faith might partner. The primary issue is: “Are they down the same mission pathway” that defines Faith? Do they reach into the community? Do they have a history in feeding the hungry? Are they open to new possibilities? Are they “someone we’d marry” (to use a metaphor)? Here, we start to think geographically when the REAL issue is mission compatibility?

Mission, I believe, is the key. Who is Faith United? That’s the \$64,000 question for May 6th. Is there another way to think about the future that poises Faith United for a future that uses the commitment, the leadership, the people skills, the education, the initiative...the treasure that is Faith United? THERE is the opportunity!

I do not like to put people into a position to be “shamed” into coming to church, but here I ask everyone to attend. We need you here and that means especially those that are more absent than present. You all have something important to this time in the church’s life. The best of who we are will be achieved by having broad discussion of Faith’s future.

*With blessings, Pastor Joe*