

## From your Pastor,



Mr. Brown and Mr. Smith had two poor farms adjacent to one another. After awhile, farmer Smith's fields brought in a bountiful harvest, so Mr. Brown asked farmer

Smith what had caused the transformation. What had he done? After hearing the explanation, Mr. Brown exclaimed, "That's sounds wonderful! Not hard at all!" At the right time the following year, Mr. Brown did for his own land exactly the same thing Mr. Smith had done, but nothing but weeds sprouted.

What happened? Mr. Brown assumed that what worked for Mr. Smith would also work for him. He assumed that their soils, being next to one another, were alike, and had the same nutrient and chemical deficiencies, but the soils were completely different. By adding the same chemicals, at the same ratio, to his own fields that Mr. Smith had done, he had inadvertently poisoned his land.

This story is apropos to any organic system: living plants and animals, and an organized group of people, including churches. Churches are both an organism and an organization. They have a personality and a physical structure. They have a life of their own that needs to be nurtured and encouraged, and all congregations exist in their own unique situations, with their own set of gifts, abilities, visions, and problems. This means programs that worked elsewhere may not work with a different congregation. Ministers need to first examine the soil, see where the Holy Spirit is already moving, find where enthusiasm exist, and discover obstacles, misconceptions, worries, and fears may be hindering health.

Successful farmers, business leaders, and computer system analysts are correct in stressing that we must first learn the existing system before making any changes to the system. Learning how things are currently being done, how the work flows and how people interact, precedes trying to improve them. Thus I come, not as a know-it-all expert, but rather as a fellow learner and a fellow traveler. As a committed team, we will come together to discern God's leading, and use all of our talents and gifts for the Kingdom of God. My initial aims are to get to know you and the community better, and lead us through some group discernment and data-gathering processes. Small group gatherings, individual meetings, and a few church-wide events will be planned and scheduled. I want to learn your stories, discover your aspirations and fears, and your desires and needs. I want to be of utmost help to all of you in your faith development, Biblical understanding, and service for God. All of that starts with us getting to know one another better.

My first sermon this month will provide the overall picture and vision I have of the church—what I consider the best modern-day metaphor for the Church. My second sermon will explain how my personal experiences and education has prepared me for your service.

God has worked; God is continuing to work; and God will work in our midst, if we follow His leading. The journey continues. Be encouraged and expect great things from God. Hear God beckoning us forward: "Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new. It's bursting out! Don't you see it?" (Isaiah 43:19, *The Message*).

Your pastor, Rev Chuck