

Pastor's Ponderings

January 2023

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! - 1 Corinthians 5:17

We have all experienced much change in our lives over the past few years. Some of it welcomed and much of it not. A good bit of change was prompted by the pandemic, but some also because things just change over time, and as has been the case across our lifetime technology continues to develop and change at a rapid pace. It's hard to keep up. Sometimes it seems just plain impossible. Yet, to stay vibrant we must change. All living things are in a process of continuous change. Change is good and necessary, but it can also be disorienting. Or we can think of it as reorienting.

There is an overarching theme of radical change and reorientation called for and proclaimed, and at times even demanded in the New Testament. The word translated in most Bibles as "repentance" literally means to turn around and head in the opposite direction. Jesus repeatedly calls for repentance in the Gospels with passages such as, "unless you repent, you will all perish" (Luke 13:3), and "repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matthew 4:17). Paul likewise calls for reorienting change: "be transformed by a renewal of your mind," (Romans 12:2), "put on a new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 34:24). Paul even proclaims that in Christ "everything has become new."

Sometimes the changes we make in our lives come from within us. Other times the change happens around us and draws us into it. Over the past couple years there have been notable changes in our sanctuary and our worship together. As we responded to the pandemic and changes in technology and our culture. First, we added sound panels for improved acoustics, then a camera system for video recording and streaming. Last summer we got a new baby grand piano, and recently we reversed the organ and choir areas.

This month comes one more new thing. A very visible reorienting thing: large TV screens are being installed, one on each side of the sanctuary at the front and a smaller hidden screen facing the organ, choir area and pulpit. At first our use of these will be tentative and experimental, but the intention is to project hymns and readings during worship as well as other possible enhancements. Presentations of other kinds may also be displayed during congregational or special meetings, and perhaps there may be occasional movie showings or other uses. Many churches have taken or are taking this same path for increased flexibility in song selections without need to purchase new hymnals or songbooks, increased visibility for some who struggle to read small print in hymnals and bulletins, and expanded options for ways of presenting scripture and sermons. Change is not always easy or comfortable. It can take some getting used to, and a period of trial and error is inevitable. But remaining vibrant always does require change and we believe this is a change in a good direction.

We are grateful to the Rishel family for suggesting and underwriting this addition to our sanctuary, remembering all the time and energy Jack gave to caring for and enhancing our church. May this change truly enhance our worship and be a blessing to generations emerging behind us.

May it be so.

