



AUGUST 2022 PRESIDENT'S LETTER LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

I had the chance in the past year to visit a few places where I've lived before 16 years in California and almost 6 years in Idaho, where I live now. Last summer I was in Connecticut where I lived for 7 years and first sensed a call to faith formation ministry. A few months ago, I was in Maryland where I lived for 15 years and began my seminary studies. I visited the campus of United Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg, PA and remembered clearly how I felt when I was starting my seminary journey.

All these places shaped my call and the various ministries where I've lived out that call. It is useful to visit the past from time to time, as it brings learnings to light as you remember being in that setting. Many of the learnings from a particular setting get lived out in new ways in new settings with new relationships. I've moved a lot in my life, both during my childhood years and as an adult.

These moves taught me to be adaptable, how to make and keep friends, and how to unpack boxes and organize stuff.

Adaptability, relationships, and organizing stuff are all foundations of faith formation ministry. Programs move at a fast pace; we are getting done with one event and moving onto the next very quickly. Often it is difficult to find time for reflection and evaluation. Evaluation is important and can be done in creative ways as we are moving along. Relationships are also important as we move from program to program. As we move from summer into fall, organization is a part of what we do as we plan for what is coming next.

What do we take from each place that can help carry us forward? How did we adapt when things didn't go as planned, or unforeseen circumstances forced us to change plans? What relationships provide consistency and stability as we are moving from season to season? What stuff needs to be unpacked and organized as we are preparing for the next event? One mover advised me to unpack kitchen boxes first, then one bedroom and one bathroom. We can set priorities and organize, through our network of relationships, that allow us to take the past and use it for the next step. Unpacking is not just a physical task, but a spiritual one as well.

Moving is messy, there may be boxes and packing material all over the place. Ministry can be messy, as we plan for a future during a time of upheaval. How can we embrace the messiness and live into our call to faith formation in new ways? What is the stuff we want to take with us into this future? These are questions that can be explored over time. We are in a sense always on the move from place to place as we share the Gospel with others. Unpacking can be an adventure as we explore ways of being the church.

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