I’m Listening
By Dave Edwards

So, I understand there is a new pastor in town. I wonder what’s going to change. What comfortable routines will be disrupted? What historical traditions will be displaced? What earthquakes of change are about to rock the seismic landscape of Lynden Community Church?

Well, not much for now.

Carla and I are here because of what a wonderful church this is. We have a good thing going here. Heartfelt worship. Authentic love for one another. Bible Studies and preaching centered on God’s Word. A wide and cheerful participation of the saints in service. A magnetic welcoming of new folks. When Carla and I walked out of our first service here, before we reached the car there were literally tears of gratitude to God flowing… after a 3 year search we had found a church home and we both knew it immediately. It was like walking into the warmth of a family dinner, and being welcomed to the table like a favorite aunt and uncle. You can’t program that, by the way, it happens because of the authentic love of this church family. So, as they say, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

Now, does that mean that we’re perfect? Well, not likely. As a wise old Seminary prof told our group of graduating students in 1984, “Gentlemen, if you find the perfect church, PLEASE DON’T TAKE THE JOB AS PASTOR, because you’ll ruin it for sure!” None of us are perfect, including churches. There are always improvements to be made, routines to evaluate, traditions to revisit, and new paths to ponder. But a healthy process of change includes, at the very least, honest evaluation, careful consideration of God’s Word, sanctified creativity, and diligent leadership. And for a new Pastor that leadership starts with a single Word… LISTENING.

For the next few months I will be engaged in a steep learning curve, and you will all be my instructors. Who are we? What history has made us thus? Where are we strong? Where are we weak? What are we doing well? What can we improve? What is working? What is not working? What have we missed? What are our goals? What do we want our church to look like in 5, 10, 20 years? What is the core of our church personality that we will never sacrifice? What is our role in the community, and the world? And… and… and…

It would be absolutely absurd for a pastor to come into a church and begin an uninformed renovation of a church ministry. But it would be equally absurd for a pastor to come into a church and never offer any careful leadership toward the change that people have longed for. So, if I do my job properly as a leader, I will be listening so carefully that when and if we begin to talk about change, it will welcomed as the fulfillment of your long held dreams for Lynden Community Church.

Now, does that mean that you will not notice anything new or different? Of course not. Carla and I are different people than any of your former pastors. We will bring our own personality and giftedness, just like any other member of this church family. Carla will choose areas of
involvement in our church that are consistent with her personality and gifts. That means that her ministry here will be different from any of our former pastor’s wives. And that is the way it should be. The same will be true of me.

My personality and gifts will be different from any of your former pastors. So, of course you will notice some small tweaks here and there that will be reflective of who I am. There may be small tweaks in how the worship flows around the sermon, without disrupting the wonderful ministry of our worship team. The pastor’s office will be set up to reflect a priority on confidential pastoral counseling, without a major renovation. My management style will likely create some small changes in how the administrative details of our ministry are handled, without tampering with the genius of Ginnie. None of this will be better or worse than past days, just a bit different, reflective of a different pastor. But remember, we are talking about tweaks, not earthquakes.

So, all of this is to say four things:

First, RELAX. If you feel a small tremor here and there, it’s only the tremor of a tweak, not the prequel to a seismic event. I’m in learning mode. If you hear me asking questions about something dear to you, they are only questions designed to help me learn.

Second, HELP ME LEARN. Talk to me about what is important to you. Make an appointment or ask for a visit. Come sit in my office or have a coffee. Let’s get to know one another. Tell me what you feel I need to know about our church, our church family, and you. I’m listening.

Third, BE HOPEFUL. If there are obvious things in our church that you feel need attention, we will get to them. In the right time, in the right way, taking the right direction, we will follow the leading of our Lord together. With God’s help and direction, we will make our church better and better through the coming months and years.

And finally, BE CONFIDENT IN OUR FOUNDATION. God’s inspired Word, the Bible, is the Divine and final authority for Christian faith and life. Everything that we are as a church family and church organization will be filtered through the grid of God’s truth. His Word will be the final authority for directions that we may consider for our church. Ultimately we will all be listening for our LORD’S direction.

So, from both Carla and myself, thank you for the honor of being part of this wonderful family of God. May His gracious wisdom guide us as we move forward together!

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