

Sharing at Hyde Park Mennonite – 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, November 5, 2017

By Kathy Bilderback

I begin with a text from Colossians

Colossians 3: 12, 14-5, New Living Translation (NLT)

<sup>12</sup>“Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. <sup>14</sup> Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.”

When I was called to serve as part time associate pastor alongside Larry from 1991-1993, I was a young, single, new seminary grad and this was my first calling as pastor. In other words, I was pretty green but I’m grateful you took the chance to hire me. Significant in all of that is the way you demonstrated tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness and peace not only to me but within the church body and within the community.

I’ve always been impressed with how you nurture and encourage each other with a lot of grace and love as persons are led to live out their faith within the wider community. When I served, there were members regularly demonstrating on the streets against the death penalty, others were asked to speak at community social justice events, ongoing Bible studies focusing on peace and stewardship of the earth, and a grappling of the war that was happening in Iraq at the time. Loving God and others within social justice issues were very much a part of life in this church and I believe continues. I have appreciated that witness.

Significant to me are the relationships that developed while serving, especially with women who shared their hearts and lives just because I too was a woman along a journey of faith.

I’m grateful for other relationships in.....

- the junior high youth group activities that I led
- the conversations over coffee, along walks or bike rides or through invitations to be part of family events
- the Wednesday night potluck dinners
- And the way in which you practiced love, gentleness, and patience as you walked with and affirmed me in my pastor licensing, celebrated with me when I married Scott, and how you nurtured and carried me when I lost my father which all occurred the 2 years I served.
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So thank you for your faithful witness and as Paul writes in Philippians “I am sure that God who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” It was truly an honor and a gift to serve with you for 2 years and now continue in the many friendships.