



FROM: THE DESK OF PASTOR CARUANA
TO: The People of Zion
DATE: September 9, 2020

GOODBYE, MY FRIENDS

My Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

As I write this last reflection to you, I am remembering these words from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (*The Voice Bible*):

*For everything that happens in life—there is a season,
A right time for everything under heaven:
A time to be born, a time to die; a time to plant,
A time to collect the harvest;
A time to kill, a time to heal;
A time to tear down, a time to build up;
A time to cry, a time to laugh;
A time to mourn, a time to dance;
A time to scatter stones, a time to pile them up;
A time for a warm embrace, a time for keeping your distance;
A time to search, a time to give up as lost;
A time to keep, a time to throw out;
A time to tear apart, a time to bind together;
A time to be quiet, a time to speak up;
A time to love, a time to hate;
A time to go to war, a time to make peace.*

And might I add ... A time to come, and a time to go.

During almost two years together, we have experienced much together. I remember the baptisms; weddings; funerals; Palm Sunday Breakfasts; mid-week Lenten dinners and services; a worship picnic in the Salunga Pavilion; a community Trick or Treat event; the Fall Harvest Bash; and the singing, praying, preaching, fellowship, and friendships. I remember it all! There was some tearing down of old ideas and planting of new ideas; some disagreements and some resolutions; some remembering and some forgiving. We have laughed and cried; mourned and danced; and ate way too many cookies and desserts. We have said goodbye to members who went onto the church triumphant, and we have welcomed seven new members. Zion Musik and First Thursday concerts began. Bathrooms and computers were updated; a much-needed altar microphone was acquired; equipment was purchased that will enable Zion to video and livestream worship services, concerts, and other events; additional hymn books were bought; and the worship bulletins were upgraded so all parts of each service were connected to the readings of the day ... even the cover.

And then, with little notice, our world changed and our ways of worshiping changed. I remember it all!

Throughout it all, we have all grown in different and wonderful ways while experiencing a great deal of stress as well as mercy, grace, joy, and love! The Lord has blessed Zion in more ways than we can count. The Lord has certainly been with us and has shown us that what you think is impossible, God makes possible. Now, more than ever, it's time to keep the momentum going. Volunteer to serve on committees, jump in where you see a need, establish a clear church identity and follow where it leads, start something new, and pray without ceasing. After all, the people of Zion are, "United in Christ and called to love and serve" ... the church, the community, and each other.

I have always believed that a pastor is called to a particular place, for a particular time, with a particular purpose for a particular group of people in a particular community. We may have not accomplished everything that I had hoped for, but I tried to serve Zion to the best of my ability and respond to God's call. I wanted to serve you in a particular way so that you would be better prepared for that day when a new pastor is called to Zion.

When Jesus prepared to leave his disciples, he found three promises to share. Let me share them with you.

† First, Jesus promised to make a home in his disciples' hearts. (John 14:23).

† Second, Jesus promised to fill the disciples with a spirit of courage and comfort. "The Holy Spirit...will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you". (John 14:26).

† Finally, Jesus promised to sustain his disciples with a special kind of peace. Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you" (John 14:27).

The thing I would like you to remember is that you will always be a part of me, and I will always be a part of you. Thank you for the patience, kindness, mercy, grace, and love you have shown me! You are a great group of people, and I wish you all the best in the seasons that lie ahead. May you continue to grow in faith, hope, and love, worshipping the Lord with your whole heart, mind, body, and soul, and remember to do everything to the glory of God! I thank God for each one of you and my time with you.

† In the words of Jesus, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you."

Pastor Barb