

Into the Fields

How many gardeners do we have here? Or perhaps you grew up on a farm? What can you share with us about harvesting crops? It seems to me that harvesting or gathering crops can be pretty exhausting work.

Gathering people into the church can be exhausting work as well. Don't get me wrong, it is also quite rewarding. Did you know that the church service each week has to be planned, organized, and made ready to set forth for the congregation? This is in addition to reading and studying before writing a sermon. Have you seen our ads on Facebook? That is another way of "harvesting the crops" so to remind people to come to church.

SOUTHWICK

We have talked about the other ways that we do this through our activities but some things deserve to be mentioned again. Last night in Southwick, we hosted almost 100 diners and workers at our Annual Strawberry Supper. Even though this is a fundraiser, we were able to offer the Southwick Community some pretty wonderful hospitality.

WESTFIELD

I know that all of our thoughts have turned to summer, but I want to share some pretty exciting news with everyone. On Tuesday evening at the Church Committee, we voted to have Janet St. Jean serve as our Interim Director of Faith Formation and Family Ministries. This will allow us to lay the groundwork to establish a Family Ministries program with an eye on the addition of families to our church community. While this won't happen overnight, Janet brings enthusiasm with a list of ideas that will put us right out there in the community.

So, hurray for all those who have helped and worked to get the name of our church out there and made people stop and think twice—in the good sense—about worshiping with us. What does this have to do with me, you may ask? Well, I am so glad that you did.

In the Gospel reading this morning, Jesus asks his disciples to focus on a particular group or task. It may seem kind of odd or strange, but Jesus instructed them to stick with people of the Jewish faith. We know that it changed later, but, as they were starting, he gave them a very specific job. Remember, Jesus' preaching went on for about three years from what we can ascertain. We, too, can focus our work as we

labor in the fields of the Kingdom of God. I think that if we focus on inviting people into our church for a worship service or even just an event, they will begin to experience our hospitality and want to learn more about us. This may sound bold, but I am not worried about WHY they are here at first. Oh, we will find that out eventually but it is most important THAT they are here. Once they are here, it becomes everyone's job to make them feel welcome without being overwhelming.

Now, some of our "senior" members might think, "I really can't do anything to help with that." Let's turn our attention to the reading from Genesis. Sarah thought that she was too old to be involved with making Abraham the "father of a new nation" as she was past the years of childbearing. She may or may not have come to terms with the fact that until that time she had been "barren" which, by the way, was considered to be a curse for the woman. When she overhears that she is to have a child, what does she do? She laughs and tries to say that she did not.

I am not suggesting that anyone here who has passed her childbearing years should be "with child" or that the men should become

fathers again at an age when they are not. Some of our congregation may not have given birth but have become parents due to circumstances in their families. That is a different thing altogether. But, the point I try to make is that everyone in our church regardless of age, can help in one way or another. Maybe for one event, you can simply sit by the door for a bit and be the greeter. Offer a smile to a visitor and welcome them. Maybe there is something that you can do from home to help. I don't have a concrete example, but there is that. Regardless of our age, I firmly believe that God has a plan for each one of us.

My plea to all of us is to take some time this summer and ask what it is that you can do to help bring people into our church as well as strengthen the Kingdom of God right here in Westfield or Southwick.

A church song or folk song written by Dan Schutte, popped into my mind and while I will spare you from my singing today, I'd like to share the refrain.

***The harvest is plenty, laborers are few. Come with Me into the fields
Your arms may grow weary; your shoes will wear thin.
Come with Me into the fields.***

I wish you well this Father's Day and hope that the summer if it ever comes, will provide everyone with numerous opportunities to rest and enjoy the weather to the best of your abilities. For those who will take off, we will miss you but will be ready for you upon your return. I hope you'll consider joining in the gathering of the harvest, weary arms, thin shoes, and all.