

## **Remember, Restore, Renew based on Isaiah 58:11-12**

Shared at Shadow Rock United Church of Christ/Kick-Off Sunday

Sept. 7, 2008

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The message for Kick Off Sunday was divided into three sections. Pastor Ken and Rev. Laura Adelia shared the preaching responsibilities, and Rev. Laura wrote and preached with great eloquence the “Restore” message.

### **REFLECTION ON REMEMBERING**

The term household has a deep and rich history of meaning. It is more than a structure with a roof and walls and rooms. That would be a house. A household includes the physical structure and it also includes the activities within those walls and under the roof.

Here at Shadow Rock I understand that we are a people whose worship and study enlarge our world view from the narrow secular worldview. It is our larger framework of faith that gives us the privilege and responsibility to engage secular people with life's ultimate possibilities. When I use the word “household” I do not limit myself to the modern notion of a “family consuming unit”. I prefer the classical meaning that comes from the Greek term *oikos*. The deeper classical meaning of household includes the site and activity of a family hammering out the best quality of life for each individual and the family as a whole. The household is the vehicle by which we figure out what it means to be most human. So, each of us are a part of many households. We have the households we grew up in, we have the household of our jobs, we have the household of Shadow Rock, we have the households of Phoenix and our country, and we have the household of our planet. How we order the activity, rules, and boundaries of our households is the intersection of faith, politics, and economics. This is another sermon another time, i.e. the month of October as we explore the relationship of faith and politics in worship and in the educational hour in between the two services.

This morning I invite you to think in terms of household; household remembered, household restored, and household renewed.

When we hear about the devastation of hurricanes the stories often center around the destruction of people's homes. We can understand that in those circumstances the households has been shaken physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, and spiritually. Their houses have been so affected that their households, their lives, have been shaken at their very foundations.

The sacred text guiding us this morning comes out of the devastated household of Israel. The beginning of their restoration and renewal starts with remembering. They remember the great deeds of God in their past. Their collective memory of the past gives them reason to hope for restoration and renewal in the future.

In my life I lived in many places. My memories of our first house in Akron, Ohio, include a large back yard, a large ditch with grassy pockets for lying down and watching the clouds, a green and red swing set, and a row of apple trees with the best sour green apples in the world. I remember the hard wood floors, my bedroom full of light in the morning, laying under my dad's foot stool and watching TV. I remember my red rubber boots and walking to the bus stop shattering the ice in every mud puddle along the way. In my mind I can revisit this place and give thanks. I give thanks for the experiences that shaped and formed me. In my mind, I can reverently touch each memory, give thanks, and feel strength to move on and move ahead.

This morning I invite you to think in terms of the household of Shadow Rock; household remembered, household restored, and household renewed.

You have lived in this place. Your memories include the foundation pillars of Bill Smith and David Wo. Your memories include the building of additions and the tremendous fellowship you experienced as you gave your time, energy, blood, sweat, and tears. Give thanks for these people, for each other, and the experiences that have shaped and formed you. In your minds, reverently touch each memory, give thanks, and feel the strength to move on and move ahead to restoration and renewal. For those of us who do not have the same history or memories, let us honor those who have been here longer and know that we will have our time.

## **Reflection on Restoration**, by Rev. Laura Adelia Sept. 7, 2008

In our fast paced and very busy MBA and BMW world, freeways, traffic, etc. where we work the majority of our days and waking hours, keeping busy doing things all the time. With cell phones, texting, emails, noise and constant interruptions. 24 / 7 we tend to do, do, do all the time. It can really wear us down.

We are a culture and society of "Don't just sit there, do something!" But when do we "undo" or rest, or rather just "be"? A big part of spiritual health and wholeness is restoring our souls from time to time. But what does this mean exactly? Let me tell you a quick story.

I live in an older home. When I first bought it a few years ago, it needed a lot of TLC, if you know what I mean. I began the long process of refurbishing and restoring the house. With each project, three more projects developed!! Those of you who have ever worked on a house know what I mean! The easy way would have been to just buy a newer house! Or just replace many of the things in the house.

One project was dealing with the older, dinged up doors and hinges inside my house. It would have been much easier, and probably cheaper to just remove them and replace them with all new doors. But upon closer inspection, I saw the deeper beauty of the older dinged up doors, the charm and attention to detail that older items seem to have, the beautiful brass hinges that were under many coats of paint. Instead of throwing them out

and getting new doors and hinges, I decided to have them refurbished and restored. It was painstaking and a lot of work. And it took a lot of time. It was a complete overhaul. But the result was great, for now, I have these beautiful doors, all restored to their original strength and beauty with shiny antique brass hinges on each door.

If something wears out, we can easily have it replaced or rebuilt. Spiritual restoration, on the other hand, takes time and work!! But many times, not with the kind of work we think of, but rather the kind of work that comes from within.

As for ourselves, our spirits, our souls, we just cannot get it replaced. We can't just go buy a new one. This is the only one we have!! So how do we restore our souls, our spirits? Notice that part of the word restore is "rest"! What restores your soul? What gives you peace? What gives you respite? What refreshes you? What gives you rest?

Close your eyes. Think of these things right now. Visualize them in your mind. Notice how comforting it feels! I am sure many of you thought of being with nature, in the woods, or the desert, or next to a beautiful lake or the ocean, or a stream. Think of a cool breeze, the warm sun, a beautiful garden. Some of you probably thought of just being in the silence, sitting quietly somewhere. How rare that is these days, isn't it? As one person told me about spiritual renewal and restoration: "Remember, we are human beings, not human doings!"

Let us meditate on this Psalm:  
Be still, and know that I am God . (pause)  
Be still and know. (pause).  
Be still. (pause).  
Be.  
Amen.

## **REFLECTION ON RENEWAL**

There is an important distinction between renewal and restoration. Dictionary .com defines each this way.

**Restoration is to bring back to a former, original, or normal condition.**

This would be comparable to restoring the doors in Pastor Laura's home.

**Renewal is to begin or take up again.**

To use the household imagery this would be comparable to building new on the same lot and same foundation vs. cleaning up the walls, replacing the wiring, putting in new windows and doors, and buying new furniture. Like all analogies they begin to break when you stretch them too far and I think we have come to this point.

The distinction between restoration and renewal may become clearer as we consider the household of Shadow rock. The difference would be comparable to your calling of a new pastor and my accepting of a new call. It is still ministry but we are new to each other and we are new together. I am not looking to restore what I had in the previous churches and you are not looking to restore what you had with Rev. Bill Smith or Rev. Dave Ragan, or are you? Sometimes it is hard to distinguish between restoration and renewal.

Shadow Rock United Church of Christ is at a crossroads of renewal and restoration. There is time to remember, explore, and discern whether there is more renewal than restoration or more restoration than renewal. In my short time here as your new Sr. Minister I have heard strong comments emphasizing both restoration and renewal. We must take time to figure out what we want to restore and what we must renew, and we have time.

This tension exists in the biblical story as it exists in all communities of people all through history. Sometimes leadership calls the community to go back and recover the purity, energy, and goodness of the past; a covenantal restoration. This often involves a desire to recover a sense of identity. On the positive side there is a sense of unity and belonging that gives strength to the people for the purpose of rebuilding “temples and walls”. On the negative side, there is often a call to exclude those who are not or were not part of the original covenant. As this dynamic unfolded in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah it meant the break up of marriages and families for the sake of covenantal restoration.

On the other hand, there is also the call to covenantal renewal. This involves the idea of recovering the original intention and spirit. This means that God is still speaking and the people are listening. It is not a new spirit. It is the same eternal spirit doing a new thing in the midst of the people. It is covenanting one with another to be that sensitive and responsive part of human society which perceives and responds to God's newest trust in the midst of history. This means looking forward.

There is no judgment between restoration and renewal. The passage from Isaiah says,

*Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.*

Please note the ruins and foundations are not rejected or discarded. The past plays an essential part.

Again, there is no value judgment between restoration and renewal. There is a difference in historical movement. An emphasis on restoration is to stand in relationship to history by facing backwards. An emphasis on renewal is to stand in relationship to history by facing forward.

Remember, I said that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between restoration and renewal. Well, sometimes it is not even necessary. Often the work of the Spirit pleasantly surprises us.

### SUN DANCE EXAMPLE

With the Religious Freedom Act of 1978, the religious traditions of native Americans could once again be brought out into the light of day. Their religious practices had gone underground and passed by word of mouth through the generations. Remembering the Sun Dance and other sacred rituals was not a difficult task, they had been remembering for a hundred years. The restoration of Sun Dances involved bringing the ritual out of the individual expressions and trying to integrate the different expressions. This ritual involved a sacrifice of flesh, a denial of food and water, and a dedication to having a spiritual vision. The Sun Dance is a ritual of the Lakota People which is to bring healing to their families and their tribes. The Lakota people did not foresee that the restoration of the Sun Dance would lead to a greater renewal. As the Sun Dance was restored, people from all over the world asked to participate and so what began as a restoration for the Lakota turned into a renewed ritual path of healing for the sake of the whole world.

So, here we are today on Sept. 7, 2008. It is the beginning of a new program year. This morning I have invited you to think in terms of household; Shadow Rock household remembered, Shadow Rock household restored, and Shadow Rock household renewed. In our bulletins are ribbons for the Buddhist Prayer Line; the Dar-Ding. Use it to write down any prayer request, concern, joy or burden, tie it to the line outside, and release it to the wind with confidence that your prayer matters and it contributes good energy to the world. You can also use the ribbon to add a prayer for Shadow Rock. Shadow Rock remembered, restored, and renewed.

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

A hallmark of our denomination is that no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey you are welcomed here. This invitation and this openness is extended through and from the Table of God. Every household has a table where families gather to tell stories and remember. Around our dinner tables our bodies are restored. In the sharing of a meal many things happen in addition to basic nutrition. It is around our tables that our hearts, minds, and souls are renewed. At Shadow Rock around this Table we share bread and a cup, and time stands still. We remember the great deeds of love and justice of God, we restore the worn out places of our hearts and souls, and we renew our individual spirits and the Spirit of our congregation.