



All Things New
by **Bishop Sally Dyck**

Bishop Dyck recalls her feelings when she was on the receiving end of a pastoral move.

As I was driving back to my office after taking my husband to the airport, I was a little worried because he was flying on an airline that had had a plane crash the day before. My concern prompted me to reflect on my life as I sped along. "I love my life!" I thought to myself.

I was driving my beloved 10-year-old car. I thought to myself, "I like my car!" I couldn't imagine getting a new one. I thought about the house that my husband and I had owned for 13 years, and after all the work we'd put into it, it was just the way we wanted it. "I like my house!" We had owned the house for the last 13 years because I had served the same church for that long, and, yes, "I love my church!" All of this was motivated by my original concern for my husband, so I concluded my litany by saying, "I love my husband of 21 years!" (You can tell from this litany that I'm not quick to change major components of my life!)

I dared to think out loud, "What a wonderful life! What could go wrong on a day like today?" I no sooner walked into my office than I was handed a message requesting me to call the bishop. After reaching him, I discovered that everything in my life was about to change—except my husband.

Within weeks, the house was sold. I purchased a new car. (My old sports car wasn't going to do well out in the hills where I was to be the new district superintendent.) I said goodbye to my wonderful church and all my friends, and I moved away from the city I had lived in for the last 20 years.

"I am making all things new," it says in the scriptures (Revelation 21:5). I discovered that "all things new" can be a painful experience. Suddenly I had a new address and phone number (which I frequently forgot) and a new home (where I didn't always know where things were). I had a new car with features that were a mystery to me at times. (One night I couldn't find the switch to turn on the bright headlights.) I had a new job in a new office in a new town with a new set of people to work with and to develop into friends. Quite frankly, "all things new" brought a new experience of many tears and frustrations, loneliness and uncertainty.

Throughout the experience, the greatest discovery for me was how much we as a society, even the church, minimize the grief, sadness, and loss that all of us experience when we move—whether it's a planned and accepted move or not. As a pastor, I know that people are forever

dealing with their anger in one way or another. I learned that some anger is really redirected and unresolved sadness. It's a lot easier to be mad than sad. Some people encouraged me to be mad because it's not as scary as sad—but I've just felt sad.

None of the things on my list of "all things new" was life threatening, but all of them brought a sense of loss and a corresponding sense of grief. I cannot bring myself to say that everything is all right. It probably will be, but I am not there yet. Psalm 30:11 says that God will turn our sadness (mourning) into joy. I wait upon the Lord!

Bishop Sally Dyck is the United Methodist bishop assigned to the Minnesota episcopal area. Used by permission of the author.

The Right Question

*Leaders do not need answers.
Leaders must have the right questions.*

We all bring unspoken assumptions to any planning or decision-making process. It can be useful occasionally to ask:

What assumptions underlie our plans?

Helping Families Cope during Pastoral Transitions by Lovett H. Weems, Jr.

We are often unaware of the grieving that goes on in our families and our congregations around times of transition. Spouses, for example, may feel resentment about not having more say in the move. Other common concerns for spouses include housing issues, leaving a job—especially if finding a comparable position is unlikely, leaving a familiar place and close relationships, concern for the clergy spouse’s heavy work schedule, and anxiety about finding a place in the new church.

Remember that transitions can be stressful times for relationships. Sharing feelings and permitting others to do so is emotionally freeing for everyone. The following suggestions can help families cope:

- Stay closely connected during this time.
- Communication is key.
- Be attentive to your own feelings, especially grief.
- Attention to your own grief will tend to keep it from hindering your help for others.
- Remember that people grieve differently.
- Do not underestimate the hurt family members are experiencing.
- Acknowledge losses with understanding.
- Remember that children and youth deal with change in their own ways.
- Involve family members in the transition process to the maximum extent of their comfort.
- Provide opportunities for children and youth to say goodbye in ways that matter to them.
- Continue family events throughout the transition.
- Try to limit the “negative emotional spillover” from church struggles.
- Find ways to mark the endings and beginnings as a family.
- Seek professional counseling if needed.

The need for leadership today is the lived, authentic demonstration of a life coherent and consistent with its professed beliefs and narratives.

Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk

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