



"See, I am doing something new!"

LEADER

Because of what we see, and hear, and smell in the nature that surrounds us, and because of the holy days we celebrate at this time of year, we gather today more conscious than usual of the possibilities of renewal and restoration, of new life and new growth. Let us be mindful of God's presence in our midst and of God's power to do something new in us, in our lives, and in our organization.

READING

Remember not the events of the past,
The things of long ago consider not;
See, I am doing something new!
Now it springs forth, do you not
perceive it?

In the desert I make a way,
in the wasteland, rivers.

—Isaiah 43:18-19

REFLECTION

I telephoned an antique dealer the other day . . . and asked that person, "What goes into being an excellent restorer of old furniture?" He answered me immediately: "Imagination. Creative imagination. You have to see past all the layers of paint, chips, past the mars and scars. You have to look past all the faults in the wood and the broken pieces. You need to be able to see the piece of furniture in its original beauty. Your eye and mind has to have imagination, and you actually get kind of excited about the possibilities that you see beneath the surface. Then, you have to have time and energy. Not a little bit of time and energy, but a lot of time and energy. These things don't just happen overnight. It takes time. It takes disciplined energy." Then he said, "Love is more important than skill. You need to love the piece of furniture and its possibilities."

[T]he analogy is easy. In many ways, our lives are like this old desk. Our lives become corroded and coated with layers of junk and old cruddy paint. . . . We are layered with baggage, with junk, with cruddy stuff. . . . But not only do we have crud. We also have enormous scars. We get scarred immensely by life. We all get hurt deeply. Scarred by childhood memories. Scarred by physical accidents. Scarred by emotional disasters. . . . We not only have crud on us and scars in us. There are broken pieces on the

furniture that need to be fixed. So also in life. Things get broken in life. Broken families. Broken marriages. Broken dreams.

God needs to do something about the crud, the scars, and the breaks in our lives. So God goes to work on us. . . . And when God is done with us, God says, "I make all things new. I restore that which is old, corroded, and scarred into someone new."

—Adapted from "The Junk Man," a sermon by Pastor Edward F. Marquart, Grace Lutheran Church, Seattle

Pause to consider the following questions:

What baggage, scars, and broken pieces do I have in my life? What baggage, scars, and broken pieces do we have in our organization?

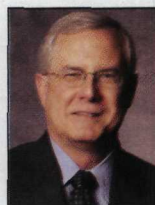
What memories and events of the past with a hold on me/us do I/we need to break free from? What do I/we need to let go of in order to perceive a future free and unfettered by the past?

LEADER

Creative and healing God, we call upon you today to do a new thing in each of us and in our organization. Remove the crud and the scars. Heal the breaks. Free us from what binds us to the past. Stir our imaginations to see beyond what is visible. Help us imagine more than can be seen. Open our hearts and minds so that we will see the new springing forth in our midst, so that we will perceive your life-giving Spirit at work in our midst. Sustain us in hope that through you something new is always possible in us and in our organization.

ALL

Amen.



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