

Howell eNews June 23, 2022

In January of 2017 my wife and I were returning home from visiting our daughter, son-in-law and new granddaughter in Houston. The first day we traveled four hours to Dallas to see the Cotton Bowl Football game. Western Michigan was playing Wisconsin. Through the game I heard Western fans shout: **“row the boat.”** The Wisconsin fans found it weird but I explained **“row the boat”** was about doing your part and moving forward. When the game was finished we began the real trip home, a 24 hour trek that included driving through the night. About an hour into our drive a fog settled in on north Texas. Visibility was poor but things only got worse. The farther we got the worse the conditions became. But, we needed to get home. There was no stopping. My wife, Carrie, had spent a week of late nights taking care of baby Josie. She was exhausted, so she slept all the way through Texas into Arkansas, Missouri and the like. At about 3:00 am Carrie agreed it was her turn to drive. She drove about 30 minutes before the fatigue of the trip got to her. For the next hour we parked and slept while the rains came down.

An hour later I started the beast (SUV) back up again. Only now it was so foggy all I could see was the stripe in the road. So we white knuckled our way through the dark rainy fog. About 90 painful miles later I saw a sign that said Mississippi River. I was on a bridge crossing the Mississippi river and I didn't even know it. It was a long and frightening trip. We drove in fog for over 900 miles.

I sometimes think driving in the fog is the story of my life. I know where I want to go, where I should go, but I can't see three feet ahead of my feet. It's hard to move forward when there is no visibility but I keep going forward. I kept saying to myself **“row the boat”** because it is better to row than just get swept up in the currents. Then my phone rang. It was my District Superintendent. He was calling to tell me that I would be moving to Edwardsburg Michigan. That previous fall I had been told I should plan on staying where I was until I was ready to retire. I was in shock. But God was in it. That was 5 years ago. As you know, I now live in Howell. I wasn't thinking that would happen either. But, it's been a life giving surprise.

These last years have been a fog for me, perhaps for you too. Not seeing ahead is not always a negative thing. I just keep **“rowing the boat”**.

- The United Methodist denomination is in enormous conflict over Biblical authority and human sexuality. What should I do? As congregants of Howell First United Methodist Church you are likely asking the same question. But the fog keeps rolling in.
- As citizens of the world we have dealt with the, “What do we do” questions regarding COVID 19.
- As a church we wonder each Sunday, “where did everyone go?” How do we get the people back and how do we reach out now? It's foggy out there.

- As Americans we have developed a fear of going to the grocery store and gas station. How do we even afford to eat or gas up our vehicles?
- As individuals we wonder how to deal with our own health challenges or the challenges of a loved one.

Again, and again, in this foggy journey we struggle. How do we “**row the boat**” now? Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:12, *“For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”* Later things will become clear but for now it is just fog.

Paul says in Philippians 3:13-14, *“...One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”*

Sometimes moving ahead in life is a strain. But, what do we do? Paul tells us in *Philippians 4:13* “we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength”. Yes, we keep “**rowing the boat.**” But the great news is **we are not in the boat alone!** My prayer is that with Jesus you will “**row the boat**” now matter how foggy it might get around you.

Pastor Scott