

Some people call it a reboot. Some people call it a reset. And I call it a kick in the pants.

There are times when life events cause us to reexamine ourselves and the way in which we have been operating. Sometimes it's a simple observation that has been pointed out to you. Sometimes it's something more urgent that makes you aware that things may not be going as smoothly as you had thought. Regardless, it causes you to become reflective and aware that something must change.

Biblically, I think of David, the king who fell into a sinful pattern becoming an adulterer and eventually a murderer. But he continued to go about his business as if nothing ever happened, until the prophet Nathan called him out on it. David got a kick in the pants moment that made him realize how far he had fallen from God's grace, and how desperate was his need to repent.

Kick in the pants moments need not be as heart wrenching as David's, though sometimes they are. They can be enlightening, and refreshing, as the awakening of spring flowers from their winter rest. Sometimes they can be inspiring and breathe new life and push us out of the ruts we have dug ourselves into.

There are times when churches and pastors need to reboot, refresh and to look at what is successful, and what is detrimental to the future success that God may have in store them. Some changes may be met with joy, while others can be painful.

As your pastor, I have been doing a great deal of soul searching over these past several weeks, and I have become abundantly aware of my need to adjust my ministry and to take stock in my time management to become more visible in the community. I am also aware that we have become extremely budget conscious, and less ministry focused and that needs to be adjusted. I will be working with the SPPRC and the committee of finance to see if there are ways for us to find savings in our operating cost that will free us to be more mission-minded in the future. The present economy is dictating that the high cost of living will not be coming down any time soon, and the expectation of people giving more to the church is unrealistic. We need to be more hands-on deck and invitational in our witnesses. In other words, we need more people to come to church. We need to be examining what is possible to reach young families. We need to reach out to our past youth members and get them involved in helping us reach today's youth. We need to be willing, painful as is, to change from our traditional worship to a more blended expression of our faith. I envision visitation teams made of our retired individuals going to nursing home and shut-in homes, bringing communion and our Lord's presence as these individuals become God's witness to those desperately needing to be remembered.

The culture has shifted in the United Methodist Church, and if we don't shift with it, I am afraid that we will become another church just trying to keep its doors open for a handful of individuals. If a church isn't in a new mission, it slowly becomes a museum of its past. Albright United Methodist has always been the presence of Christ in our community through its programs and faith witness. We need to carry on our church's great tradition of mission and witness while breathing new Holy Spirit energy into reaching our neighbors and community with fresh ideas for a new generation of Albright membership. Honoring the past and building for the future.

For the glory of God and His Kingdom, may it be so.

Rev. Steven M. Lamb