

Really, when did you make use of that soup tureen?

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"Until Again"

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We wish we had known our circuit breaker box, the Load center, had been outlawed. Add that to other items that need fixing so we can close on our house. Why would it be easy? At least we were smart enough to start thinning our stuff over these last years. Off in the mail went boxes of one daughter's trinkets and soccer trophies. Off via mail went a carton of blue ribbons won by elder daughter, along with assorted memorabilia. Last year, we presented our son with a Rubbermaid tub of his Nintendo games. He got them working. Off they went in the mail, along with his early artwork. He explained how many gamers are fed up with the complex, lurid modern video games and want the simplicity of what they experienced with Mario, Goal, Silent Service, Duck Hunt.

Take a hint, lighten the load when you can. Fix what you can when you can. You'll get a more harmonious outcome. Really, when did you last use that soup tureen?

Our thinning started with discarding everything in the garage attic. Next came purging the storage room off the utility room. We knew we were on the right track when I finally conceded I never was going to get into those size 32 bell bottom pants. Do I really need 148 ties, some older than our house? We bought our house as our starter home, it had a yard, and, best, the kids walked to Mahoning-Cooper Elementary School. Our first night here, Helen Rhawn brought over Kentucky Fried Chicken. Neighbor Les Angus didn't know if we preferred red or white wine, so he brought both. God had brought us to the right place.

What does make a house a home? Sure, there are items of special attachment. I'm fond of my bistro glasses. I really appreciate the flat top newels of our stairway, perfect for placing a glass or a book. Ghosts lurk in our homes, spirits of memories and dreams. It's beautiful, but can you cling to ghosts?

Author Ray Bradbury tells about an old lady who couldn't let go and move on. She found change unwelcome, inhibiting. She bristled at how two girls wouldn't believe she ever was young. One night, her dead husband visits her: "You're always trying to be the things you were, instead of the person you are tonight. Why do you save those ticket stubs...?"

Augustine, in discussing how eternity means we're liberated from the clock, put a 5th Century theological slant to our notion of time. He describes how there are not three times. There only is the present of past things, the present things, the present of future things. Past is present memory, future is present expectation.

Memories fill my present. Howard was dying while watching the Children's Hospital being built, laughing at how deep they had to dig the footers. "They should have asked me," Howard said. "You could drill a well sideways here." Howard was my eighth funeral after coming to Danville. 197 since. Remember when Merck was a big deal? Remember the first layoffs at Geisinger in 1993 when the new boss really muffed it by security escorting a well-respected clinician out the side door because he was going to retire soon anyway? Trips to Honduras. Books written. Stories told. Sips shared. Before dawn

hospital visits. The privilege of preaching and Bible study. Alternating tears, laughter, silence. Some successes. Some failures and failings. All worthwhile.

Whoops, the present slipped away again. The wise soon learn that happiness is a by-product, never a goal. What is the secret to happiness? Not being worried about being happy.

Change, ironically enough, is the constant.

A recent happy memory occurred last Easter Day. I was invited to lead worship for the last time at Grove Church. We celebrated Gianna's baptism, followed by the confirmation of Gianna's older sisters, Faithful and Favor. The day before a dear friend gave us two wooden Easter eggs, hand-painted. I had intended to include them as part of my sermon, but the extravagance of the day flustered me. I had planned to place an egg on the communion table to dramatize their provenance. Instead, after the service, I gave one to the two girls, describing how it was made in Ukraine but the place where these beautiful Easter eggs are made was destroyed by Putin's power-mad war. The place is no more. I gave them the egg, asking these two lovely girls to please hatch us a better world.