



Rooted in Love

They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season.

Psalm 1:3a



Leadership Message

by John DeWaters

Back in 2006 I was fleeing an episcopal denomination I had been a member of, off and on, my entire life. The break had come when the local church, for years a strong and faithful supporter of the denomination, had to reassess its ability to continue to support its hierarchy financially at the requested level. In a confrontation with their representative, we stated that far from continuing to support them, we now needed their assistance. We were flatly rejected.

Adding to my sense of alienation was my growing perception that from our Bishop on down to the retired pastors among us, there was a failure to see us, the parishioners, as the “church”. Rather, I felt, there was a glass ceiling between us in the pews and the men and women who compromised the episcopal structure, who saw themselves as the embodiment and protectors of the “church”. So, I went church shopping. When I came to (then) Second Congregational Church in 2006, I quickly had a couple of encounters with Carl Dickow that cemented my commitment here. First, he immediately introduced himself to me, and learned enough about me to establish a link (we’re both CPAs). The next Sunday, when he saw me enter the sanctuary with the furtive glance of every visitor trying to avoid notice, he called out and patted the pew next to him, “here, come sit here with me”. I was instantly transformed; I had a home here.

A couple of Sundays later, Bob Bates was playing one of his magnificent postludes. Carl said “come on, let’s go up and watch him play”. I was horrified – he was suggesting we go up on the raised dais, the lair of the lofty rulers of the church, that “priests only” place! As we approached the rail overlooking Bob, Carl said “don’t worry. We own the church”. Wow! Not the denomination itself, not the episcopate, not a local Bishop. Us. I was all in then and there.

I quickly found out that my sense of ownership came with concomitant responsibility. If we’re going to own this church, we have to take care of it. We’re a representative democracy, and most of us know how persuasive the Nominations Team can be. Sooner or later (but mostly sooner) we’re going to be asked to serve it with our time, talent and treasure. And we really can’t refuse: This is our church in a more profound way than any I have ever attended. So, I’ve accepted minor leadership responsibilities for most of the fifteen years I’ve called SecondFirst home.

And it’s all Carl’s fault.