

"A Story of an Old Fire Horse"

A story is told of a large draft horse that worked at the firehouse for years. When the fire bell rang he was ready to run with the fire wagon. When it rang they had better hang on quick because he was outta there on his way to the fire. Well they finally got a gasoline powered fire truck and retired the old fire horse into a pasture right by the fire station.

Well every time the fire bell rang the old fire horse would still answer the call. He would jump across the fence and run along with the new gasoline powered fire engine to every fire.

I have been honored to be in five delegations to the General and Jurisdictional Conferences of The United Methodist Church. I was elected to lead the lay delegation in 1996. I was also selected to deliver the laity address to the 1996 General Conference. I have served on two general agencies of the church for a total of 12 years. I have been a lay member of the annual conference for over 30 years. I have been the Conference Lay Leader and the Conference Director of Lay Speaking.

In every sense of the word - - I have been there and done that! (and got a closet full of t-shirts). I have been blessed by a church that would give me an opportunity to be in ministry in some many places and ways. Every time the Church has called I have said Yes!

As the time of the first ever Arkansas Annual Conference drew near and election of our first delegation was at hand - - my ego heard the "old fire bell" ringing once more - - and belatedly I put my hat in the ring.

The writer of Ecclesiastes says that (3:1-8): For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

God has a way of telling you exactly what time it is. God sent me an unmistakable message that my "season" was needing some fine tuning.

I was undergoing a medical procedure that required me to be in my cardiologists office every morning until about 10 am. I had it all figured out! I could be in Russellville, Arkansas, where our Annual Conference was being in held by 11:15 am if I drove very hard to Russellville each day. And then, of course, I would have to drive back home that night and back again the next day.

I did exactly that on Wednesday and Thursday. On Friday morning my ego said GO, but my Body (and God!) Said NO. I did not attend the remainder of my first annual conference to miss (except for military duty) in over 30 years.

My lay colleagues were kind enough to not elect me as a part of the delegation to the 2004 General and Jurisdictional Conferences. I am so grateful for that - - now that I have heard God's message for my life.

As a result of following my ego - - my progress in treatments for my heart vascular system was set back about a week. It took me a week to get back to the level I was before I attend the first day of conference.

It was a wake up call for me! I have had to make some lifestyle decisions. I can no longer "run to the fire" every time the fire bell rings!

I have been a long time advocate of a turn over in the elected delegations to a younger and more energetic group of colleagues.

But, even knowing that, when the fire bell rang there I was running along side the bright, shiny new modern fire engine.

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven”

God’s time is always “On Time”.

We must learn to listen to God’s “fire bell”

A Jim Lane Commentary
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