



About seven years ago, Karen and I headed back to NC to renovate my parent's house that I grew up in and to take care of my mother in her final years. We got three more years with my mom, but it took over 5 years to get the house finished. It had been our family home for over 50 years. Karen and I were finally able to get it all fixed up and in such a shape that it finally looked like what my parents had dreamed about for over 5 decades. It was, in many ways, unrecognizable from the place where I had grown up!

As part of our fix-up, we built a huge deck that sat out in a backyard that flowed down a hill to a creek my brother and I used to inhabit as kids. The now fenced in woods provided a great place for adventure for our dogs who would run about the trails.

As a bit of whimsy, I made the sign pictured above out of some of oak flooring remains I needed to get rid of. I'm not sure why exactly I took the time for this project, as I was still trying to clean out a two-car garage that was overfilled with "stuff," but the one opening to the woods made me think of life, and a promise to our adult children. So, with leftover paint and discarded boards I scrawled: "Dark Forboding

Woods, The Unknown, Possible Adventure” (the shape pointed to the wilderness and absent “e” made it look like something you might see on the edge of some swamp lands). The next piece pointed at the house, only some twenty feet away saying: “HOME, Filled with LOVE Forgiveness, Mercy Rest and Peace.” The tag underneath stated: You Are Welcome to Visit Either As Much As You Like.”

At first this was a message to our kids to basically say, as life moves on for highs and lows, you can always come back to us. But now that sign says something more.

This week, Karen and I are about 5,000 miles away from that house and sign and watching little Norwegian dancers and attending events at the Little Norway Festival right here in a little island town in Alaska. We are immersed in a whole new set of people and a whole new culture!

And as we look around, we see lots of folks who must have been out and away who have come back to find a piece of Home during this week: college students and adventurers who have made their way to distant lands now regathered to meet old friends and familiar surroundings. And we are trying to take it all in also!

Something about this week reminds me of that sign I made so many years ago as I both see people who have come back to their HOME, but who must have been out and about in those foreboding woods. They are ones who have heard the call of the wild and taken a leap of faith to see whatever else is out there, knowing that home awaits them on their return!

During the pandemic, we sold that building that had housed my family for more than 50 years. That sign went with it—no extra charge. And from that faint memory, in the midst of children dancing in the street, I had a thought. Where that sign was intended for our children, it is we who have gone off into the unknown seeking adventure. Unfortunately, there is no house to go back to, but there is HOME.

Next week we will be away at our son’s graduation from law school in Massachusetts. We will be together with family, and it will be home! The point is that it will not be the same home as when I made that sign. Time’s arrow doesn’t point backward. It only points forward to the future.

It occurs to me that such a realization is perhaps what this time of transition is about for the people of Petersburg Lutheran Church. As much as memories can call each of us to times and places that have

long passed, what we actually have before us is the future. I think maybe that was what I was getting at with those Dark Foreboding Woods. They may seem scary because they point to an unknown. But the unknown is less scary when we are not alone. In fact, it might be enjoyable when we have our family with us—especially when it's the family of God.

So, for those of you who read this message, I hope you will take pleasure in the coming months of forging into the great unknown to see what awaits in the future.

As for me and Karen, we are taking OUR choice to heart for the next few weeks during the summer. My weekly article is going on sabbatical (though don't discount an occasional epistle).

For us, we are on our continuing adventure! And though, we don't have a house to return to, we