

September 8, 2019

Dear Incarnate Word Family,

Rarely have I ever been rendered speechless – I am a pastor after all; but this afternoon I was overwhelmed by your profound love and generosity on the occasion of my 25th Anniversary of Ordination. I can honestly tell you I did not want the afternoon to end. I cannot begin to express the depth of my love for each of you, nor can I adequately express my appreciation for the gifts of the beautiful all season stole, the NASA – “Rock and Roll Incarnate Word” T-shirt and of course the more than generous monetary gift. The vibrant red, orange, and yellow colors of the stole will forever be a reminder to me of the fire of the Spirit that has guided our years together in proclaiming the depth of God’s love; the blue and purple colors will remind me not only of the source of that love - Christ on the Cross – but our participation in that love through the waters of Baptism. The streaks of green will remind me of the growth that comes when we gather together as sisters and brothers at the foot of the Cross. And of course the mustard seed that has been sewn into the stole will be a constant reminder to me that though God’s kingdom always starts off small and seemingly insignificant, somehow in the end, it comes to fruition providing shade to the parched, rest to the weary, sustenance to those on the margins, and new life to all. I have already seen glimpses of that kingdom in the work that you and I have been blessed to do together!

As for the NASA t-shirt, don’t be surprised if you see me wearing it around church throughout the week and even on an occasional Sunday morning. Yes, the shirt speaks to the fact that I am a NASA geek through and through, but even more importantly, it reminds me of the great heights to which God has called you and me in the proclamation of the gospel as well as the fiery launching pad God has given us here at 597 East Avenue.

I would be remiss if I did not mention my deepest and heartfelt appreciation to Tony Gugino and Earlene Seibold, Wolfgang Pfizenmaier, Margret Roberts, and Lynn Krauss-Prince for their making this whole affair possible. Their generosity in helping secure the Genesee Valley Club and their organizing of every last detail, right down to the creative place settings at each table, has made this day, one that I shall not soon forget. I wish to thank Tom Madden as well, for the kind and gracious words he offered while serving as Master of Ceremonies for today’s celebration. And of course, I thank each of you for your generous gifts and your presence today; for your kind words and for your warm hugs. I did not want this day to end!

But as I reminisce about the day and about the outpouring of your gracious love, my heart is warmed in knowing that we are still together and God willing, will continue to be in the months and years to come – praying, playing, singing, laughing, and crying.

Thank you for affording me the privilege of walking beside you in this great gift we call ministry. Through your love and generosity, I have truly come to see that our God is indeed a great God!

Peace and abundant love,

Pastor Doug