This is not foreign to the way God acts. O, Yes, God created – that was a big action. Think about what happens after that big creation event. God forms a relationship with Adam and Eve. I won’t go through all the succeeding history but we can pick this story up with God speaking to Abraham. Abraham, a solitary soul, who was called by God to follow him in faith. “I will make of you a great nation, “promised the Lord, “and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.” (Genesis 12:2) Later the descendants of Abraham were slaves in Egypt, and God observed the misery and the suffering of his people. He called one person, Moses, to bring his people out of Egypt (Exodus 3:7-12).

When God entered this world as a human being, God made a small entrance – not a large one. He reached out to an unknown girl named Mary, who lived in an unknown town, who was engaged to an average Joe and who gave birth in a backyard barn in a backwater village in an obscure corner of the Roman world. Even Jesus’ life and death were barely mentioned in Roman history. But small is precisely what changes the world.

There is a popular praise song, “Our God Is an Awesome God.” But could we also sing, “Our God Is A Smaller-Than Quantum Dots God.” When we are dispirited, befuddled and feel like no one knows our names, we are not thinking “Our God Is an Awesome God.” In our adversity, in our loneliness, in our feeling small and insignificant, we need to understand what God told Isaiah to share. Our God is large enough to be small. Our God is powerful and all knowing enough to know each of us by name out of the billions of people on this earth.

We also need to know that God uses the small and the humble to accomplish God’s work. Like quantum dots injected into the bloodstream of an ailing patient, we are sent to impact the world, bringing hope to the discouraged, guidance to the lost, comfort to the grieving and assistance to the needy. According to Jesus, our mission is to welcome strangers, visit prisoners, and bring food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty and clothing to the naked. When we serve others in these simple but significant ways, Jesus promises us that we are really serving him (Matthew 25:40).

Margaret Mead, a famous anthropologist, once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” In suffering and pain, we want an awesome God who can and does act in small ways. In our service to others, we want a big God to give power to small things.

Years ago, a church in Philadelphia had a Sunday school that was overcrowded. They actually had to turn children away. One Sunday, a little girl walked to the church intending on going to Sunday school. She was turned away because there was no room for her. From that day on, the little girl started to save her pennies to help the church build a Sunday school with more rooms. Two years after she was turned away from the church, she died suddenly. In going through her things her family found a pocketbook by her bed with 57 pennies in it and a little scrap of paper with a note saying that this money was “to help the church build a bigger Sunday school.”

The pastor of the church used that note to make a dramatic appeal to his congregation for funds to build, and people’s hearts were touched. On hearing the story, one realtor even gave the church a piece of land. He said he just wanted a one-time payment of 57 cents. The local newspaper picked up the story, and it was carried across the country.

The pennies grew and the result was a church that can seat 3,300 people and a very large Sunday school department. In addition, a university and a hospital also were built out of that initial effort. All these great things were accomplished from the faith and commitment of one little girl and 57 pennies.

My friends, one of the biggest obstacles today to God accomplishing big things in our churches and in our lives is our thinking. We have been taught to think big – dream large. We often fail to realize that big things are accomplished through God’s people acting in small ways. We tend to think that if we don’t have a packed sanctuary, we cannot accomplish much. We tend to think that if we are not a mega church, we somehow cannot do God’s work. We tend to think that if we cannot give thousands of dollars, our gift of a few dollars is insignificant. We tend to forget the widow’s mite. We think that if we do not have hours to volunteer each week, we will not volunteer with the minutes that we can give.

God is saying to us, “I am doing a new thing, do you not perceive it?”

I cannot help but reflect on the Discovering Our Future process. We invited everyone to think big – What kind of church would you envision in five years? Many wonderful things came out from you all. Four priorities emerged:

Offer inspiring and dynamic worship.

Provide Biblically-based, multigenerational learning and
fellowship opportunities.

Engage with our neighbors and serve the community.

Enhance our campus while preserving the historic nature of
our sanctuary.

These are big priorities. They begin with small steps that the teams around those priorities will implement in the coming months.

Is our future bright because we will then become a large church with large programs. No, our future will be bright because we understand that God works through individuals in hundreds of small ways to share God’s love. We sometimes have to look hard to see the new thing emerging. As we move forward together, know that God is doing a new thing in our midst. God will use every act that we dedicate to him to reach the world we live in and affect the community we live in.

God said, “Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:18-19)

**A NEW THING—DID YOU NOTICE?**

Rev. Ed Morgan

Sunday, July 24, 2016

The Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

Isaiah 43:16-21 John 12:1-8

Thousands of years ago, a defeated, exiled people sat in a country far away from their own. The leaders and artisans of Israel had been taken into exile after a complete defeat of their country. They sat in a distant country wondering if God had forsaken them.

These people, who had praised God as an awesome God, were now wondering if God would remember them in their time of deep need. God gave Isaiah, the prophet, the words to speak to them: “Thus says the Lord, I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”

I recently ran across an article that caught my attention. The article was about “quantum dots.” That might have escaped your reading. “Quantum dots” sounds like an oxymoronic phrase. “Quantum dots” are nano-sized semiconductor crystals that have the potential to revolutionize everything from computer storage to flat screen TV’s to genetic engineering.

“Quantum dots” also have the potential to revolutionize our thinking. They are revolutionary because they lead us to dream big but also to act in small ways. “Quantum dots” allow trillions of bits of information to fit on the size of a pinhead. Injected into our bodies, they have the potential to fix malfunctioning organs and fight disease--fight pollution or mine precious minerals.

Dreaming large and acting small reminds us of what God said to the people of Israel. “I am about to do a new thing,” God proclaimed, “now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:19) You have to look in small places – in between all the great events of the world.

The people of Israel had been suffering in exile in Babylon, and God sent them word that they will soon be able to return to their homes in Palestine. “I will make a way in the wilderness,” promises the Lord, “and rivers in the desert” (v. 19). This will become, for them, a second exodus—a second chance to escape slavery and travel across the desert to the promised land.

 I love this passage. I love what God spoke through Isaiah because God reaffirms his commitment to work through small rather than big.