

Uniform

By Rev. Todd Farnsworth

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Today, following worship, we will embark upon what I have been told is a most magical week in the life of this church. I had thought Holy Week was pretty special, and it was, but this coming week also ranks up there among weeks at BCC. After worship today we will enter into the sacred season of Rummage.

It is my first season of Rummage here at BCC. There is a lot of excitement and planning and fretting and energy already dedicated to the week. I can tell you from hundreds of emails that started back in late February (or at least that was when I got added!) that this Rummage Sale is well thought out and debated! It even comes with its own uniform!

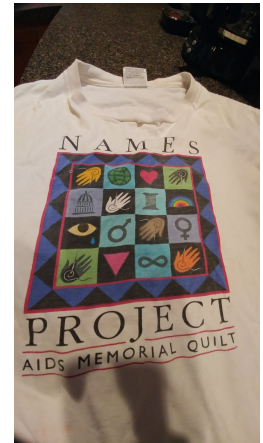
Through the years I have had the pleasure of wearing a variety of uniforms at special occasions like Rummage.

- In Vermont, back in the late 1980's, I was very active in facilitating a



community youth group. At that time I wore brightly colored Jams and wild T-shirts. As the 80's rolled into the 90's, my T-shirts became a little less wild and a little more pointed, and I moved to message T-s that reflected our church's ministry around the issue of HIV/AIDS.

- When I moved to Belchertown, MA, I got folded into an annual town Fair ministry that attracted 15,000 people a year. Over three days our church would



sell Taco Salads to the



people who roved the town common in search of food in between carnival rides and informational booths. For 8 hours a day, Friday-Sunday, I would put on this hat, and stand on the runway calling out *“Tacos! Taco Salads, here! Get your Taco Salads! It’s one big plate of YUMMM!”* rain or shine or bee

swarms.

- And then I got to Hampden and while we were there the church and I created an annual Blessing of the Bats. We made these t-shirts for the congregation to wear during the event so that folks would know who to ask, “Why are you blessing bats???” and “where are the bathrooms?”

Whatever uniform I wore over the past 30 years, I observed the folks I worked alongside living out the words from today's lesson. *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.*

In the midst of the chaos that is any church event (no matter how well planned) there is an opportunity or twenty to stray away from Jesus.

Tempers can flare. Egos can be bruised. Feelings can be hurt. Individuals in community can be lost in the pursuit of the making the "best event ever!" Folks put so much effort (worthy effort) into bringing these ministries to fruition that God help anyone who slows or redirects the imagined flow of activity!

- I have always been grateful for the moments in the mix when somebody has taken time to reflect on where Jesus is in the midst of our event. Did we help someone see another person as sister or brother and so experience compassion? Did the low cost of our food bring about a justice to include everyone at the table? Did we raise awareness about God's creation so that folks became better stewards of the earth and its resources? Will our passion for recycling spark someone to look beyond the incredible sales and reconsider what they do with their no longer used treasures?
- I have always appreciated when someone has asked me at the start of the day, or in the depths of disarray (often with a tone of exasperation or laughter), "Can we get a prayer, Rev?!" And we've joined hands around wherever we are standing and asked for peace

among us and a spirit that will reflect Jesus in the pandemonium that's about to ensue.

- It has been a sweet time when, like the earliest church folk, someone notices that when we are together working for a common cause it becomes a sacred space. And then we break bread in this space and *eat together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people*. I have enjoyed the fellowship of preparing for these events, and the grace that occurs around table when we take a break from the action to eat and recognize each other's efforts.

Well, today I put on a new uniform. (puts on uniform)



Today I join the legacy of BCC Rummage Sales where we will live out the work of the early church as it is described in today's text: *All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.*

Following worship we will march through these doors, down the stairs and begin bringing the property and possession we have held in common across to Beebe Hall! We will begin a week of living out today's text about how the early church came together. We will begin a week of witnessing what it is to be a fellowship of faith!

I look forward to working alongside you. I look forward to enjoying the fruits of the Spirit which (like in other churches I've suited up for) will bloom in the midst of our hard work together. May God bless us as individuals and as a community to keep our eyes on the prize of being a true reflection of Jesus love. Who knows, perhaps our labors will lead to: *the Lord adding to their number daily those who were being saved*, to Jesus' glory. Amen.