



### It's Later

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My husband and I lugged boxes around in the garage last weekend. He dragged out the bins of Christmas lights; then I needed to get to a huge box on the far side of the garage, in front of which we'd stacked other tubs and boxes. There was no way to reach it without pulling out everything in front of it. Of course. Isn't that the way it always is?

As we moved deeper into the morass, a gray plastic tub blocked our path. About 4-feet long, the plastic had grown brittle, and the tub was starting to disintegrate. The sides were prevented from collapsing by the sturdy rubber lid. It was heavy. "What's in it?" I asked my husband. He couldn't remember either. So, we slid it back and forth into an open area and popped the lid. Inside, we found a complete mish-mash. Pom-poms, a power strip, decorative blue bottles with stoppers, a cue stick. "What IS all this stuff?" I again asked my husband, as I began rifling through the tub.

It finally dawned on me that this tub held all the leftovers of our move from Colorado. As we prepared to leave and sell our home, we had to pack everything we wanted to keep and get it on the moving truck to Wisconsin. This tub held the items on which we were undecided. Time was short. Just put it in the tub. *We'll sort through it later.* Not surprisingly, we never did. The tub went promptly to the bottom of the stack in the garage. Three years later, this crumbling tub and its assorted contents were unearthed.

Most things went in the trash or to the second-hand store, but there were some treasures. A leather pouch of darts, for example. Why would anyone get rid of a nice pouch of darts? I set that aside. I think I might even have a dart board somewhere. I found a plaque with a photo of my daughter's first competitive soccer team – when she was seven. I held that out for her. I'm sure she'll be excited to see it. So, there were a few keepers in the bin.

I'm guessing some of you have a box or bin or drawer like this one – the place where you put things to get them out of the way, and you promise, "I'll sort through it later." Then, you get busy or you forget about it altogether.

Our ministries can be the same way. We have the clutter of traditions and committee structures and partially completed strategic plans. We get distracted or busy, and we put the mish-mash in a metaphorical box to sort through later.

It's later, folks. As we look toward the distant Spring and the possibility of resurrection from a pandemic with multiple vaccines, it's tempting to put the random revelations we've had about our ministries into an unlabeled box and close the lid. We're busy with Advent; our medical ministries are swamped because of the coronavirus; senior care ministries are struggling to overcome resident isolation and its mental health impacts. We'll sort through who we are and what we're called to do later...when we have time.

In the meanwhile, the container is brittle and crumbling. Some parts of our ministries are ready for the trash; others can be repurposed. Perhaps we'll unearth treasures that can be cleaned off and celebrated. As tempting as it is to put aside the hard, tedious work of straightening out our ministries until later [*after* Christmas, *after* we've returning to indoor, in-person worship, *after* Easter...], the time to do it is now. "Later" has arrived.

If we don't do this hard work now, I worry we'll just shove it all back into the garage and miss out on the opportunity for spiritual growth. So, before our perspectives grow stale and memories dim, reflect on the past year. What have we discovered about ourselves and our communities? What do we need to admit or confront? In what unexpected blessings can we rejoice? May you unearth treasures with wonder and delight!