

From This Corner
Larry R. Baird

Ready to Leave But Not

I stood there ready to leave but not. It was at the door of the home where my parents had lived their last years. Since it was sold, my wife Brenda and I had finished gathering some of the last things we had wanted to keep and mementos for our boys. So it was time to go. The work was done. I was ready to leave but not. I felt like telling Brenda I could not bear to leave any of it behind. The sofa we were leaving was the sofa upon which she and I sat when I first introduced her to Mom and Dad. The Christmas tree top all tarnished with the tips broken off was the crowning glory of every Christmas I could remember as a kid. I knew I could not take it all. I knew I should not try to take it all. You have to make choices of what to leave behind and what to take with you.

There I stood at the door and I wanted very much to close my eyes and reopen them to find my parents still there in some kind of assurance that it was not time to move on. I know any counselor would say it was my childhood I was having difficulty leaving. There is no doubt about it. Bishop Fisher and I have shared with each other that when our fathers died we immediately found ourselves feeling like little children. Now for me, leaving the house in Medina had created a moment to acknowledge again that mom was gone, and my childhood at last, at age 54 was really over. Do not laugh. Even as I say it, it sounds absurd, even embarrassing. Somehow, however, I hope you have had a similar experience. I hope you have such because it is my suspicion that all lives, well lived, are like that. They do not have to have been perfect, just well lived.

It was hard to leave high school. It was hard to leave college. It was hard to leave my first love. It was hard to leave my first church, my second, and so on. It was hard to leave the boys off for the first semester in college with misty eyes, both theirs and ours. It is that “ready to leave but not” thing. It could be the subtitle to each chapter of my life. Chapter 2: “Larry Leaves Home for Kindergarten: Ready to Leave but Not.”

Earlier I mentioned that you have to make choices of what to leave behind and what to take with you. I chose to take a fly box filled with some of Dad’s hand tied flies to go in my fishing vest, and my mother’s trowel she

used in her beloved flowerbeds. My brother made his choices. We all took something. These holy relics will make associations with the past. My brother took my mother's well-worn Bible her folks had given her. I took the picture of Jesus, a wedding gift to mom and dad from mom's brother, that hung on the wall of every house I can ever remember my parents having. Yet it was none of the above that enabled us to embrace the future. Mom and Dad's best gift to posterity was the faith they shared that helps us move beyond being ready to leave but not.

In all seasons of transition, there are times when we are ready to leave but not. But go we must. The leaving behind and moving forward is the substance of faith.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. . . . so that (we) will not grow weary and lose heart.” (from Hebrews 12)