

THE SERMON

Sunday, June 7, 2026

Faithful Then – Faithful Now
Faithful in Every Season

Ecclesiastes 3:1–8

Beloved Church, if I have to share with you the times and seasons in which I have read, preached, and meditated on ***Ecclesiastes 3:1-8***, there have been many. Interestingly, most of those times have been as a base text for a funeral service.

And even though I have to be sensitive and share with you that I am going through a normal process of mourning as I leave Charlton, I know that this is not just me, because we are a community, and six years of ministry among you—for better or for worse—cannot be disregarded. However, let me tell you... This is not the case! WE ARE NOT IN A FUNERAL. And even though we will have a reception after the service ... let me tell you again...We are not in a funeral!

What we are experiencing together in this place is one of the many ways this Bible text speaks to us – the divine truth that ***“Everything has its time.”***

During 2026, specifically on these last Sundays, we have been celebrating the 220th anniversary of Charlton Church. It has been a time of joy, a time of memories, and a time of thanks.

Our sermon series, ***“Faithful Then, Faithful Now,”*** is a call for all of us to remember that over these 220 years, God has given us different times and seasons. Some of them are harder than others, but in the midst of all this, God has been faithful.

Because God has been faithful, we can share our own stories, as we learned in our previous sermon series, ***“Stories That Matter.”***

But during this series, ***“Faithful Then, Faithful Now,”*** I have expressed my interest in sharing some of those times and seasons with you, as your pastor. Please give me the opportunity to continue sharing those stories, understanding that ***“there is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens”*** (v.1).

Wednesday, July 1st, 2020, was my first official day among you. It was a time to get to know the staff and

learn from the way you do church. It was different, though, because we lived under all the COVID restrictions. However, in the midst of all these changes, it was time to worship – even when we were a few people together in the sanctuary, online, or drive-in. ***God was faithful and gave us the time to praise Him!***

But God's time, it is not our time. On **Tuesday, April 13th, 2021**, your pastor got COVID because of his deficient immune system, and he was hospitalized, and the future was uncertain for him and his family. But for about three months and twenty-one days away from Charlton, the church offered a time of prayer, a time of sharing meals, and a time of care for my family and me. ***God was faithful and gave us time to pray together!***

As we were leaving the season of the pandemic, the Lord invited the Church council to pray, discuss, and discern a new horizon for the church in the coming season. It was the time when we gathered and read together the book ***"The Post-Quarantine Church: Six Urgent Challenges and Opportunities That Will Determine the Future of Your Congregation."***

From that book, we learned that the coming church would be different. Some things, like streaming and online church, were not leaving us. That Charlton building needed to be open to other expressions of the

community, and that we were proud and blessed to be United Methodist. We opened our doors to Family Promise, Nepali Churches, The Soup Guy, and others. ***God was faithful and gave us time to work and serve together!***

But Scripture says there is not only ***“time to dance”*** but also ***“time to mourn.”*** During these six years, we celebrated the lives of many brothers and sisters in Christ who left us physically to join the Triumphant Church. They are still in our hearts and memories; they are still part of our time of peace. ***God was faithful and gave us time to be thankful for others' lives!***

“There is a time to plant, and a time to uproot.” Even though it was a painful season, we had to say goodbye to some churches, brothers, and sisters who left for another denomination over theological and doctrinal differences and differing interpretations of Scripture. This is part of our history, and even though it hurts, we cannot ignore it. ***God was faithful and has given us time to heal!***

This is wisdom for real life. God never promised things would stay the same. Seasons shift. Change is built into the very order of creation. If you have lived long enough, you know that life is a string of beginnings and endings, hellos and goodbyes, planting and harvesting,

weeping and laughing. Sometimes, those seasons overlap in ways that defy logic—like how you can feel joy and sorrow in the same breath.

I want to say something that might be hard for us to hear: change is not failure. It's not a sign that something went wrong. Change is part of God's faithful rhythm, woven into the story of every person, every family, and yes, every church.

Charlton Church has lived through many seasons. If these walls could talk, they'd tell of baptisms and funerals, potlucks, weddings, and mission trips, seasons of abundance and seasons of scarcity. Through it all, one thing has been constant: the faithfulness of God.

A few weeks ago, the members of the church received the new directory for 2026. The names in the directory have changed, the faces in the pews come and go, but God's love has not wavered.

Today, we find ourselves in a season of transition. For me, it's a time to uproot what has been planted and to trust that God will plant me in Middlesex UMC, as my new appointment and church to serve. For Charlton, it's a time to say goodbye, but also a time to prepare for what God wants to do next. There will be a new pastor, new ideas, and new energy. It's bittersweet—because

loving and letting go are always intertwined in the life of faith.

But hear this: a pastor's leaving is not the end of God's work in this place. It's just a faithful step in God's ongoing story. God is not done with Charlton Church. God is not done with me. God is not done with you. The promise of Ecclesiastes is that every season has its purpose—and God holds each one.

So, beloved Church, let's take a moment to reflect. What has God done in this season we have shared? I see faces, I remember prayers whispered in hospital rooms, learning and laughter in our Bible studies, tears shed at gravesides, and hands joined in service. I see children growing up, and asking challenging questions, faith taking root, forgiveness given and received. I see saying ***"As I blessed you, you blessed me"*** – as you extended your hands with me, receiving the send forth not only for you, but in my weekly ministry, too. My heart overflows with gratitude for all God has done among us.

And now we are invited to trust. **The same God who was faithful then is faithful now**—and will be faithful in the next season, too. Trust doesn't mean pretending change is easy. Trust means holding onto the promise

that God is with us, even when we can't see what's ahead.

Charlton Church, you have been a gift to me. As you prepare to welcome your next pastor, I encourage you: open your hearts wide. Pray for his or her ministry. Support him or her. Step into this new chapter with courage and unity. Remember, the church is not built on any one person, but on the faithfulness of Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

As I prepare to serve at Middlesex United Methodist Church, my prayers go with you. May God bless the seeds that have been planted here. May God water them and bring new growth. May you continue to be a community **where faith meets life**, where every season is received as a gift from God.

Let's close in prayer:

Faithful God, for every season, we give you thanks. For what has been, we offer our gratitude. For what is, we ask your presence. For what will be, we trust you. Hold us steady through every change and transition. Keep us faithful, and keep us rooted in your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.