

BLESSINGS ALWAYS

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Association Minister Message

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PERSEVERANCE. "...and let us run with *PERSEVERANCE* the race that is set before us..." (*Hebrews 12:1*). A friend of mine is a very talented person with great technical/construction skills. He graciously helps others doing their home repairs or replacing broken items. But his own home projects multiply as he is always finding new things to do around his home. It has been eight years since he told his wife that he would get the whole-house air conditioner unit in place—and they are still using window units, even though the parts are in the storage area. He does get things done, eventually, and his work is excellent. So many distractions—so little time to get things done.

There is a commercial on TV about a 26-year-old woman just getting her high school diploma last year. The joy that she showed was fantastic. She has now begun her college studies with resolve and determination to finish her degree. *PERSEVERANCE* and new purpose are guiding "*the race that is set before her...*" Tenacity and urgency are helping her focus on accomplishing what seemed so impossible just a few years ago.

The Apostle Paul's dissertation on "*faith*" is one of his finest writings. Paul was an early advocate and spokesperson for the "*new*" Christian community. It is astonishing how Paul and other "*newbies*" who became Christian started a movement that continues to touch today's Christian community almost 2000 years later. In spite of persecution, their witness to Christ's message, teachings, and resurrection gives meaning and purpose to our everyday living. Paul declares, "*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*" (*Hebrews 11:1*). Even in the early church gatherings Paul describes being "*surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses...*" (*12:1*). They had determination and resolve to share the powerful message of Jesus' resurrection.

This new order of faith brings about purposeful living with the "*presence of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing*" (*UCC Statement of Faith*). The *PERSEVERANCE* of the first Christians reminds us of "*the race that is set before us...*" God's Spirit does turn the world upside down and we "*race*" to experience the creation through God's generosity. "*God bestows upon us the Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races...Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto God. Amen.*" (*UCC Statement of Faith*). BLESSINGS ALWAYS.