

Happy the Home When God Is There

Henry Ware (1794–1843)

Happy the home when God is there,
and love fills ev'ry breast:
when one their wish, and one their prayer,
and one their heav'nly rest.

Happy the home where Jesus' name
is sweet to ev'ry ear;
where children early lisp his fame,
and parents hold him dear.

Happy the home where prayer is heard,
and praise is wont to rise,
where parents love the sacred Word,
that makes us truly wise.

Lord, let us in our homes agree,
this blessed peace to gain;
unite our hearts in love to thee,
and love to all will reign.

ΤΩ ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Moving after Three Decades

Kevin T. Bauder

My family moved into our present home in 1998. It was a HUD home. We bought it pretty cheaply, even by the standards of the late 90s, but we knew that making it livable was going to take lots of work. We received help with some of the most urgent tasks from the “Rent-a-Bums,” a group of retired craftsmen and handymen who were known for their good deeds as members of Fourth Baptist Church. Some of those men are among my heroes: Dewey Russell, Dick and Dave Nyquist, Merle Harmon, Har Anderson. They ran electrical circuits, connected gas appliances, repaired drywall, and performed dozens of miscellaneous tasks. Har’s wife, Char, did much of our original painting.

The home is a story and a half with a basement. For our first year, we hardly set foot in the basement except to store a few boxes. It had moldering old carpet and decaying built-in furniture, all of which had to be removed. It had been divided into four rooms. We eventually had to take it all down to the studs. One of the rooms became a utility area, one became my shop, one eventually served as my Zoom studio, and one became a sewing and ironing room.

The place needed new carpet immediately. Over the years we’ve had to replace or redo almost everything else. First, we had to side the garage. Then we had to replace the roof. I built a shed in the back yard—the city allowed a 10x12 footprint, but I cantilevered the construction so the usable area was a bit larger. We poured a concrete patio. The HVAC had to be replaced about fifteen years after we moved in. We took the bathroom down to the studs and replaced everything—that’s when I learned how heavy cast iron bathtubs are. A craftsman installed a native black ash hardwood floor in the kitchen, then matched it with custom cabinets of the same wood. When the city resurfaced the streets, we replaced the driveway. Our last big project was to install new windows and siding.

The house was always a project in the process of improvement. I’d work on it whenever I could find the time (which has been less and less as the years have gone by). We made plans that we’ve never been able to implement, for example, putting a three-quarters bath in the basement.



In the Nick of Time is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

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While we've lived in this home, our children graduated from high school and university and received their terminal degrees. They haven't lived with us for ten or fifteen years, though some of their stuff stayed here when they moved on. With our children gone, some parts of the house haven't seen much use for a while.

Meanwhile, two other things have happened. One is that Central Seminary has shifted its educational focus to distance education. We are now teaching in virtual classrooms, using the Zoom platform. There are other reasons for professors to be on campus, but we can teach from anywhere that has a decent Internet connection (and we have). The result is that living close to the seminary is no longer an urgent concern.

Then too, I've taken a pastorate in a town about an hour north of the seminary. Shortly after accepting that responsibility, Mrs. Bauder and I purchased a small home nearby as a base for ministry. We have been dividing our time between two homes.

My thinking was that I would be able to have more of a presence locally if I owned a home near the church. What I've discovered is that maintaining two homes is a huge drain of energy, time, and money. Consequently, we have decided to make the northern home our only home. Debbie has retired, so she no longer needs to commute to Central Seminary. I'll continue to drive in, but not every day. We are selling our old home after nearly thirty years of occupancy.

In our younger days we made many moves, but we never lived in one place longer than about six years. And most of our moves coincided with some break in life. We moved to Colorado to attend seminary. We moved to Iowa to pastor. We moved to Texas for doctoral studies. We moved to Minnesota to teach at Central Seminary. In every case, we were ending one thing and starting another.

This move is different. We are trying to do our sorting, packing, and moving while life is going on as usual. I'm still teaching at the seminary, and I'm still pastoring the church. Life isn't slowing down for us, so we're trying to move in increments.

When my car recently needed to be replaced, I deliberately bought a pickup truck. For the past month, I've been making five or six trips every week to haul stuff from our old home to our new one. We're also making multiple trips to donation centers and disposal sites.

We're moving out of three stories (including the basement) and into one. We'll have no garage, only a carport with no storage space. We need to downsize. And sometimes the choices are painful.

I've heard people say it before, and now I find that it's true. Over thirty years, stuff piles up. More stuff than you think. Stuff that needs to be handled and sorted, sometimes trashed, sometimes given away, sometimes sold, and often moved. But it all takes time.

What this means is that right now I have too many plates spinning. I'm trying not to let anything slip through the cracks, but sometimes they do. I usually work best when I can focus on one thing at a time. Now my attention is scattered among dozens of tasks.

The good news is that it will all be finished this month. We'll be materially moved by the end of July (or so we plan!). We still have to stop all the services at the old place, open a new bank account, change the address on all our electronic accounts, and update our driver's licenses and car registration.

I'm looking forward to getting all the work done. When it is, I hope to get some work done. If you know what I mean.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
