

The Church's One Foundation 1 Cor. 3:10-23

It is an honor for me to be invited to share in your 160th anniversary. I was here as your third interim pastor for five short months back in 2000 and I have many fond memories of that time.

When I was getting my Christmas decorations down this year I recognized the box with the stenciled Christmas tree that was a product of our Advent workshop that winter.

I recall the look of surprise when I asked at a Christian education meeting, when was the last time you had a sex education class here? I had noticed we had a large number of 7th graders. One surprised CE committee member almost gasped, "what about confirmation?" I said your new minister can do confirmation, it will be a great opportunity for him to bond with the kids, but I'm a MFT and I'd like to have a sex education class. We had two classes one for junior highs, one for senior highs. Years later one of the junior highs, then in college, remembered the class. She told me, "All I remember is that you brought us Hardees bisquits." I thought if one youth made one good decision as a result of the class, it was worth it.

I remember to this day Charlene's pearl of wisdom when she said to me, "that was before I realized control is an illusion."

I remember visiting Judy who had lung cancer and a couple of elderly ladies who were homebound.

When Mrs. Cook died one of her sons said, All I want at the funeral is the 23rd Psalm and a prayer. Mrs. Cook was the oldest living member of the congregation and was active in the community. I decided we needed to have a meaningful service for the packed house that showed up.

Gene Daniels chaired the stewardship committee. They proposed a budget 50% higher for the next year despite our being behind that year. Some called it a fantasy budget. I went and talked to Gene. He said it is a faith budget. We believe this is our time to move forward. I followed your progress in the newsletter and you came within a few thousand dollars of making the faith budget.

I remember hearing two men talking one Sunday after worship. They were planning to take a teenager whose dad was not present in his life out on one of their boats. One dad brought it up and the other caught on immediately. It was a beautiful thing to behold.

We went on a retreat to Montreat. I remember Ian blowing me away running a pass pattern and discovering Tiffany had an NFL arm.

Foster Jackson showed me longest family dinner table outside the Amish community. He had to build onto the house to hold it.

One beautiful Sunday morning we baptized Shaelynn Maloney into Christ's fellowship.

I remember how the choir would gather after the Peace and lead us in singing "Our God is an awesome God."

John so carefully cultivated our church grounds beautification plan and gave me a pen he made himself.

I remember bonding with Steve and Heather who were so much on my spiritual wavelength.

We were struggling to get everyone on board to renovate this sanctuary.

Peter and I spent a Sunday afternoon assembling office furniture with a single screwdriver. We needed a power screwdriver in the worst way.

I filled in for Sam one hot summer Sunday outside and got a dirty look from someone for giving the children lollipops because they didn't want to deal with the sugar rush during children's church.

One time Sam pretended to give me grief for flipping burgers at the church cookout because people razzed him for not flipping burgers.

In 2006 you sponsored a Katrina mission trip to Long Beach Miss. We finished three roofs. Lindsey told me she was on the cross country team in college and when a runner from another school tripped and fell, she stopped

to help. It took a while to get her to some others for help and Lindsey wasn't sure of the course, so she just took off. She apparently took a short cut through the woods and caught up to the others. When she finished with a great time, she was informed that she had the most improved time for the week in the entire conference, and when she tried to explain the mistake, they didn't listen to her. It's still one of my favorite sports stories, because the Good Samaritan was rewarded albeit for the wrong thing—an example of poetic justice.

I shared these memories in order to instigate some of your own. What joys and sorrows and sacred moments are part of your life as a participant in ACPC?

As you have all the ministers come back for this anniversary celebration remember how St. Paul reminds the church in Corinth that it doesn't matter who the leader is even if he is a master builder, because what counts most is the foundation of the building and there is only one foundation of the church—and that is Jesus Christ.

And everything we have done and will do as ACPC will be measured by the plumb line of Jesus Christ. Paul says it will be tested by fire. And if we have built with good solid materials our work will last, and if not it will be lost.

In five short months I had all those wonderful experiences that I mentioned and more. But then I began to wonder

about the other 159 years and 7 months of this church's life.

How many people have been lifted up in prayer; how many meals provided to those who sorrow; how many random acts of kindness and senseless beauty, how many kind words and words of comfort and encouragement; how many visits to those who were hurting; how many people befriended; how many youth received some guidance for their lives; how many poor people helped; houses built, food provided, lives touched by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ? How many classes taught, how many dollars given, how much spiritual growth has taken place? How many children and adults have been baptized into ministry in God's kingdom how many souls strengthened by partaking in the body and blood of Christ? How many people all over the world have been touched by your witness through missions?

I'm on a roll here, but you start to get the picture of the incalculable good that has been done through this church of Jesus Christ.

Now on an anniversary it is appropriate to look back and celebrate. But it is also important to look at our foundation and make sure we are still building on Him.

To do so we must learn what Jesus was about—his awareness of God, his centeredness in God through his

practice of prayer, his spiritual wisdom, his compassion, mercy, forgiveness. His ability to move beyond his own ego and serve God's purposes instead of just his own. His leadership by example. His willingness to suffer for the sake of his God. His friendship with sinners and outcasts—the people whom the respectable people scorned, he embraced, included, and welcomed. His love for children. His appreciation of other's gifts and other's faith.. His stories that catch us up and then turn the tables so we have an "aha" experience. His teaching against violence and revenge. His call to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. His willingness to change direction when he realized he was wrong. His transparency through which we see God's dream for the world. His reflection of God's glory!

First we get to know Jesus because he is our only foundation. We study his story in the gospels and how he was understood and embraced down through the centuries. And we get to know him on a personal level and we answer his call to ministry and meet him in the people we serve. We offer him our lives and notice how they begin to follow the trajectory of his life, death, and resurrection. We become disciples who follow his way, his truth, and his life. There are things about him and his way we cannot know unless we actually follow him. His companionship and the joy of his presence cannot be fully realized unless we are walking in his way. It is our

experience of him as we serve him that makes him real to us.

One of the most interesting theories about why we choose the partners we do in life belongs to Harville Hendrix who says we choose people who complement us in certain ways. There are things about our partner that we find attractive and are drawn to that we don't have. These things we like about our partner provide us with a list of things we need to develop in ourselves to become more complete, whole persons. If we develop those parts of ourselves, we tend to continue to appreciate them in our partner, but if we don't, the very things we first liked about our partner become things we resent.

I think this is true of Jesus as well. He marched to the beat of a different drum, God's drum. And the various things he did show us what we need to do to become more complete children of God. If we work to make his way our own, we appreciate how his example beckons us to grow and move forward in our faith. If we don't the gulf between us will grow wider and we may not discover what he can mean to us as the foundation of our lives. If we don't follow him in church, our church will become something other than a church.

Through our growing relationship to Him and our openness to his spirit we are enabled to imagine the future

which will extend the legacy of ACPC as a church of Jesus the Christ.

To know Jesus, to receive him and others into our inner life, and to follow him into the land of Unlikeness is how we become a church built out of good material that will withstand the tests of time and bring glory to God. So keep building ACPC. Keep building! Amen



