

July 2017

“A NEW THING” - AUTHENTIC, MYSTERIOUS & REAL

Twenty-six people gathered in the Skipwith sanctuary Wednesday, June 14, - half had gathered for worship and ministry regularly throughout the years here, the other half were new to this particular sacred space (though not without connection to God in other places). God, the Holy Spirit, was the principle “actor” drawing us together.

In John’s gospel (Ch. 3), Jesus tells a leader of the Jews, Nicodemus, that if he wanted to see the kingdom of God then he would need to be born from above, born of water and the Spirit. Nicodemus can’t quite grasp what Jesus means. Jesus explains further by saying, “The Spirit blows where it will and you hear the sound of it, but you cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Sometimes (perhaps, most times!) God chooses to move in ways that are outside our expectations. We don’t always see it coming...and we are not real certain where it’s going.

So, the Spirit blew . . . into, through and around the heart, mind and body of a woman who responded by stopping by our church. For weeks she and her husband had driven by on their way to a nearby hospital and with each passing day the draw on her spirit grew stronger. She described it as “feeling compelled” to stop. Thus, this dignified and determined former teacher allowed the wind of God’s Spirit to sweep her right into the church office and into a conversation with me.

I must say that I was taken off guard. God didn’t call ahead to tell me that I would have a visitor that day. I was working on a variety of “preacher” things . . . worship and sermon preparations, pastoral letters and cards, outlining time-frames and parameters for upcoming events, making phone calls to and sending emails, etc. You know – I was **busy**.

The conversation started slowly with a halted confession, “I’m not exactly sure why I’m here. I, uh, am not sure you can even help me.” In short order I learned that she believed God to be doing a new thing in her and her husband of fifty years lives. They had a history of serving God together through the years, nurturing their children to love and serve the Lord as well. She had recalled having experienced the sacrament of baptism as a young person but felt the need

to be baptized again while her husband had no recollection of being baptized and after investigating, could find no evidence that he had (no baptismal certificate, no church record, no eye-witnesses). It troubled him, and his heart began to yearn for a time to proclaim his faith publicly and be sealed in the baptismal covenant.

The Wind of God continued to blow and a week later all three of us were in conversation in my office. I listened as together they alternated sharing some of their life journey. Their story included a business trip he had taken to the Holy Land where he had secured an empty "Coca-Cola" bottle and filled it with water from the Jordan river. This water would be used to seal the covenant of baptism for their children and grandchildren. After becoming clear that he had not been baptized as a child, as he had assumed, that Jordan River water would be used to seal his own baptismal covenant and to re-affirm/renew his wife's covenant right here in Skipwith church on Wednesday, June 14, 2017.

I want to express my deep gratitude to those of you who accepted my invitation and followed the Holy Spirit's lead to be there to witness this "new thing" that God was/is doing in Jack and Judy Speer's lives. Thank you for entering a covenantal relationship with them and their family, and for agreeing to trust God to grow the relationships in God's way and time (They live an hour away and will not be able to physically participate with us on a regular basis.) Yet again, I am deeply moved by your willingness to generously extend the love and hospitality of God. You welcomed and embraced them as part of the universal church. It was/is authentic. It was/is mysterious. It was/is real. It's a new thing!

Joyfully Yours,

~ PASTOR TODD