

"This is My Church"

Ten years ago Paul and I were sitting in the back of the church listening to Sue Marsh as she played "God of our Fathers," and when Sue hit the fanfare that precedes the singing, something stirred in me as I looked around our church, and all of a sudden I heard these words in my mind instead of the ones written in the hymnal. "This is our church, It's where we meet the Lord. Down through the years, The word of God's been heard, Seeds have been sown, and nurtured in her care. True to Gods word, Salvation's plan we share,,-trHere we've found friends, who share our joys and tears. Our family of God, grows closer through the years. Within these walls, The love of God abounds. Lord keep us true, Until we're heaven bound."

It's hard to believe that the time has passed so quickly and we will be celebrating our 85th Anniversary this year. As I look around the Church today my heart is saddened when I realize how many of those familiar faces that meant so much are no longer with us. Some have moved on, but most of them have gone home to be with the Lord and joined the church triumphant.

I can't speak for anyone else, I can only speak for myself, but I'd like to share a few of my memories and thoughts about our church with you.

First of all, I love this church, and I love its people. Are we a perfect church? No, we are not. The church isn't the building, the church is a body of people who gather in God's house to worship Him. As people we are all just imperfect human beings bound together by the love of God. We can only fulfill our purpose to serve the Lord when we look beyond our human faults and keep our eyes on Jesus who died for the sins and imperfections found in the lives of all of us.

Are we always an exciting church? No, we are not. We have had many mountain top experiences and we've also lived in the valley of reality. Where in the Bible do you find we have to be floating around on cloud nine all the time? In fact in Isaiah we read "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Sometimes the most lasting commitments are made in a quiet way. That truth goes as far back as to when Jesus chose His disciples. There was nothing dramatic about it, all He said was simply "Follow Him. "

Is salvation preached in this church? Yes, it is, and always has been in the forty eight years I've been here. Not always in the same way maybe, but I remember how Uncle Charlie use to say, " If you belong to Linwood Methodist Church and you say you haven't heard the message of salvation, then you are the one with the problem, because you just aren't listening. "

The church is like a clock, sometimes we focus on the face and only see the hands moving that tell us the proper time, but we forget that beyond that face are many little cogs and wheels that are the intricate parts of the clock. There are people like that in the church too, people who put feet on the Gospel as they reach out to others in little ways that are so important. A hug when you are hurting, a ride to church or to the doctors or the store when you have no means of transportation, or just letting you know if you have a need they will be there for you. I know because they have reached out to me and I feel blessed to have them as my friends. I love this church because it's where I truly came to know the Lord, and it's where my children were saved. It's where my son knelt in prayer just before he left for Vietnam, and it's where his flag draped casket stood just five months later at his home-going service. It's because of this church my husband is where he is today. He was as stubborn and anti-social as a person could get and I wondered if anybody would ever penetrate his shell. When the retirees' group started they kept after Paul until he finally gave in, and I will be eternally grateful of their love and bonds of Christian fellowship that he found with them. Paul couldn't be shoved into the kingdom of God, but because of these men from our church he was loved into it, and now so many of those men, like Paul, have been called home and are bound together as brothers in Christ for all eternity.

These are just a few of some of my personal thoughts and memories of my church family. May God guide us in all we say and do so that down through the years there will be others like me who can truly say, I am so glad to be a part of this family of God. I know I wouldn't trade the friendships I have formed, or the Christian fellowship we share for all the money in the world.

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