

## Polly's Pondering

The other day after worship, as I was heading to my truck, I noticed a young man and young woman walking. I was finishing a conversation with a trustee of the church, while out of the corner of my eye I watched the couple stop in front of the church marque. They both squatted down and leaned in to get a closer look.

I don't remember how I started the conversation with them. But within moments I discovered that he was the son of a pastor, who had served here in Franklin. He was traveling around and taking pictures of all the churches in which he had been raised in the family of faith while his dad preached the word in various places throughout the Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. When I invited them both in their eyes lit up with delight. Such a simple thing to offer and yet such an obvious source of delight. We, myself, the trustee, and the young couple, went inside and I took them through the Sanctuary. We talked about the storm damage, the repair of the stained glass, the restored and refurbished altar, the items that were made from the salvaged wood from the former altar area. The trustee and I took them into the narthex where we invited him to ring the bell. He did so and joy tolled out with the bell's ringing.

When we stepped into the office, I gifted them with two pens that were made from the wood of the former church altar. I told them one was for him and the other for his brother. As they turned to leave there was a visible presence of gratitude that filled the space between us.

That got me to thinking how much we often take for granted the spaces and places in which we worship God. I can remember sitting on the back pew in the small church in Liberty Missouri in which I attend alone. I can see in my memory the piece of paper resting on the hymnal as I and another youth played the dot-to-dot game. We didn't have the slightest notion of how important that place would become to us. It was there that I discovered faith in Jesus. It was there that I first lifted my voice in praise and dared to recite the scripture in front of the church. It was there I was baptized; it was there that I exchanged marital vows, and it was there that I dedicated my first child.

Come to think of it the place would mean nothing without the faith. I am grateful to my two unexpected visitor this last week. They remind me how much I am grateful for the people in the place where I found faith. They remind me how void my life would be without that faith. And most of all they remind me how import it is for us to do everything possible to make a place and be the people God uses to build faith in the children and youth of our mission field. Let us pray together this prayer by Francis Brien:

*Eternal God, We thank You for the witnesses of all times and all places. May the stories of their lives show us the richness of Your grace. May they inspire us to look deep within our souls. May they inspire us to take the risk of faith and to serve You in new ways. Amen*

PS: Don't forget to finish the Bible Reading Challenge. We will recognize those individuals who have completed the challenge on the last Sunday in August.