



Friedens Church of Washington, UCC

*“A Country Church with a New Spirit”
Open Doors and Open Hearts*

Grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus Christ,

God is so good, so wonderful, so worthy to be praised! Our Lord brings new mercies each day, each moment of our lives! What a wondrous thing God’s grace really is, as it forgives, transforms, and renews! And even when we give up, close ourselves off to God’s amazing love, our Lord is still at work, still guiding, still bringing forth His redemptive power in miraculous ways.

John Robinson, an early pilgrim and Congregationalist, seeing the new world from the deck of his ship, told his flock that, “God hath yet more light and truth to break forth from God’s Holy Word.” I attended a worship workshop recently, and Dr. Grundy emphasized that worship to God should be transforming, and he lifted up two main points that must work together. The first came out of the spirit of reformation so prominent in the tradition and history of the protestant church to which John Robinson and our own church belong. “The Church Reformed should always be reforming according to the Word of God.” Is God finished with you yet? Or is God still at work, still moving, still bringing His light to shine in your life? That means we must always be open to change, open to the movement of the Holy Spirit, open to new ideas and new ways of doing things in the church.

The second point is taken from Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” Not everything new is something God is saying. Being open to change does not mean we jump on every new fad, try to be like the church down the street, or lose our own identity of who God calls us to be. In other words, we need discernment—diligent, faithful, and prayerful discernment.

I am proud of our congregation for their willingness to meet change with openness, courage, and faithfulness, to move between the Holy Spirit’s wondrous capacity to make new and “the old, old story of Jesus Christ and His love.” Let us always look to the Word of God for guidance and direction, and let us be open and receptive to hearing God’s voice, praying continuously for our Lord’s revelation.

Flora Mason, Ray Tirado, Jan, Ben, and I attended the annual meeting of the South Central Conference in early June. The Spirit of Christ was alive in our worship, our fellowship, the keynote address, the workshops, and our business. For many years, the conference has been struggling with finances, unable to raise the needed funds for our operating budget. But for the first time in several years, the conference brought in more money than it spent in 2007. This is great news and demonstrates a much more stable ministry. I give thanks to God! The keynote speaker was Rev. Paul Nixon, author of *I*

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Refuse to Lead a Dying Church. In many ways, I feel this little book is speaking directly to our congregation. Through his work with existent congregations and the formation of new ones, Nixon found those churches that were “alive with the Spirit” had the following traits, choosing:

- 1) Life over Death
- 2) Community over Isolation
- 3) Fun over Drudgery
- 4) Frontier over Fortress
- 5) Bold over Mild
- 6) Now over Later

The kids who attended Vacation Bible School had a great time. I want to thank all those who helped to make it a success and to also thank the kids for participating. The folks really put a lot of time, energy, and love into this week for our children, and it showed. During story time, on one night, the story teller even dressed up like Zacchaeus and talked to the kids from the top of a tree! And then gave out Hershey Kisses as a way of paying back those who he had wronged. There were puppet shows and songs and crafts and of course the sharing of the Word, which all showed the kids how important it is to serve Jesus and others. It was also good to work together with other churches, coming together to do ministry. I believe it also opens doors for this kind of cooperation and mutual ministry in the future, and I am excited by the opportunities.

I want to thank the kids and all those who created and brought items to send over to our service personnel in Iraq. What a great way to show our support and love. May we continue to pray for God’s protection and guidance for all those serving in the military, for our leaders, and most of all, for peace.

I want to thank all those who helped with the potluck dinner and brought food and participated. It was a lot of fun, and it was good to break bread with each other. I am also very thankful for all the folks who volunteered to serve on the various committees in our church. Your service is important. It is an extension of the ministry of Jesus Christ, and it is deeply appreciated!

Remember, God is still at work in our lives, our church, our community, and our world! God is still speaking, and I give thanks to our Lord for God’s amazing, transforming, renewing grace and love. May God work a miracle in your heart today!

Blessings and Peace,
Pastor Ron