

The Pastor's Report

To the Church at Canton, blessing & peace upon you,

I evoke a Pauline salutation this month because on my mind of late has been the notion of “the church” *over time*. Often we think of the church in terms of the here and now. Having just entered my 20th year in Canton this fall, though, I am perhaps more appreciative of “the fluidity of the constant.”

Change, obviously, comes to us all; both in terms of the world and our individual part in it. Often, though, we understand the church to be static; after all, it has been around a long time. Our particular church is one of the oldest in our community. Many of those first congregants were alive when the Declaration of Independence was signed; and, perhaps, either fought in the American Revolutionary War or knew those who did. That we have been standing our ground here in the middle of Canton almost since the birth of our nation is no small thing.

Such a long-standing presence, I believe, is a great comfort and source of strength to the community. Though more a matter of an emblematic knowledge rather than a specific one, to many we represent stability, consistency and, perhaps to some, sheer doggedness. It is upon this kind of certainty that any society is secured and moves forward.

Over these many generations, though, we have welcomed, lived with, and had to say good-bye to so many generations; brothers and sisters in the faith all. Paradoxically, then, we consist of a profound fluidity which manifests as an abiding constant.

Now, if we focus our perspective on our church from multiple generations down to just one or two, we begin to see that although our track record at longevity is impressive, our perceived stalwartness really is quite tenable; relying solely on a relatively small number of folks, in any generation, to actually carry on the work of the church.

During the process of preparing this month's newsletter I was struck by the fluidity of the constant in having to say good-bye to old and dear friends Mickey Williams and Betty Peckham, while at the same time embarking on a new All-Church Read initiative to gift the selected book to each family in our church with young children...15 families!

Another example this month of the fluidity of the constant is having surpassed the \$100k mark fundraising for the fountain in the (our) park. The old being resurrected to new life and new purpose, with hope and joy being preserved for the future.

“All the years combine, they melt into a dream” (lyrics from “Stella Blue,” by Robert Hunter). So, we arrive at the church, our church, as it is today. A dream yielded by centuries of dreaming, ever vigilant in laboring to birth that dream in the lives of the generations which will follow.

Know this month just how important your presence and purpose is here on the Park in Canton, to our world, and to our God.

In each other we are so richly blessed,
- Rev. Mike

We have become servants according to God's commission that was given to us for the world, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but which has now been revealed to God's saints. - A reworking of Colossians 1:25-26