



A Legacy

January 23, 2019

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On Sunday, I worshiped with the members of First Presbyterian Church of Fox Lake, along with Lee Tan (Presbytery Moderator) and Ann Gibbs (Associate for Ministry Vitality). On a snowy, cold day, we gathered in the cozy sanctuary that has served the congregation well for 95 years. Sunday's worship was different than all the others, however, because it was their last service. The church members voted on January 20, 2019, to close.

For some members, the day was too difficult, and they chose not to come to worship at all. For those present, it was a somber day, lifted only by the inspiring message of Rev. Julie Waterdu and the conversation over the wonderful potluck meal that followed.

Oh, and one other thing distinctly lifted the mood: hearing the testimony of their legacy.

On the day the church voted to close, member Kathy Jenswold brought her adult daughter to church. Kathy herself had been raised in the church. From the time she was a little girl, Kathy attended Sunday School and worship. Then, she brought her daughters. Though her daughters now attend worship in their own hometowns, they are faithful Christians too.

Tanya, Kathy's daughter, shared a story during worship that touched everyone. Tanya has been praying with her young daughter -- Kathy's granddaughter -- each night. From the Christian roots established by her mother, Tanya often asks her daughter, Bryn, whether she would like to know Jesus personally and invite him into her life. Bryn has never shown an interest in taking that step.

On the morning of January 20, 2019, on a snowy and cold day, the day that First Presbyterian Church of Fox Lake would vote to close, Bryn told her mother over breakfast that she was ready to pray. She wanted to offer the prayer to invite Jesus into her life.

We might wonder what our legacy will be as the Church. Assuming we don't naively believe the Church will continue in perpetuity, we wonder what it will leave behind. We think of our beautiful, stained glass windows. We might have a large foundation that will fund mission activities in the community. Perhaps our legacy will be the unified voice that cried out for justice.

Maybe, God willing, that legacy will be a prayer said by our children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, inviting Christ into their lives.

On Sunday, February 24, at 3:00 pm, First (Fox Lake) will open its doors for a final service of dissolution, and you are all invited. We will honor the ministries that lasted 95 years, as well as the courage and faithful stewardship that prompted the remaining members to make their decision to close. We will celebrate their legacy. I pray that you will make the trip for this service. As a connected church, we celebrate together and we mourn together. February 24 promises to be a bit of both. But, most important, it is a time for the Presbytery to stand together.