

Sermons at Union Congregational Church

Preached by The Reverend Gail L. Miller, Pastor

May 7, 2017

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Luke 24:13-35

We Had Hoped...

Think of a time when you were disappointed....
the job interview didn't turn into a job
the hard work on the paper only got you a B
the relationship did not last forever
the friend you trusted gossiped about you...
The list could go on and on... *You had hoped...*

Disappointment is everywhere, and falls on everyone.

We can try to guard against it:

- some of us train ourselves to see the good side of everything - silver linings and all
- some of us hold back and take no risks to avoid even the possibility of disappointment
- some of us remain distant and aloof, projecting stoic confidence

But the truth is disappointment is hard....*We had hoped*. I can remember as a kid growing up, that worse than a punishment from my parents was hearing those words: "We are so disappointed in you...."

We had hoped - such sad words.

As we approach a new building addition to our church, I think about these words - *We had hoped* - and I wonder - will they be our words?

Because right now, we have such hopes!

Back in January 2016 more than 50 of you met after church in small groups to Dream Big about what a potential building project might look like... we established that these were not planning conversations, but dreaming conversations, and so there were no bad ideas or suggestions that were too far fetched.

It was great - some of the dreams were

- To add an underground parking garage...
- To tear down the parish house and ask the town to move Willowdale over so we could use this land...
- To flip the sanctuary so the altar is there and we all enter from here...
- To lower the sanctuary and put offices / rooms above it
- To make the space above the sanctuary usable space...

After going through the notes from all the conversations, it was clear that we needed to do two things:

- 1. Make the church building fully accessible, and**
- 2. Consolidate the functions of the church to one property.**

And our hopes for our physical space began to take shape...

- An elevator
- Bathrooms up here on the second floor
- Deacons storage space which includes a sink to prepare / clean up communion
- A music room near the sanctuary
- Handbell storage space
- Sunday School rooms that are accessible, so that when a kid is in a cast they don't have to stay away from church 'till they get it off

Sunday School rooms that say to our kids, "you are a part of us."

Lobby space large enough for 50 families to arrive at church in a 15 minute window and comfortably fit inside the door

Meeting rooms and offices to allow for flexibility and multiple groups meeting at the same time

And there's more - but that's such a good start....These are our hopes...

But you know, we're not the only ones with these hopes. Seventy-seven years ago, the people who sat in the very same pews you are in made a very similar presentation as we'll be making today....

More Sunday School rooms

Fellowship space

Bathrooms

A chapel

Except instead of out back, they planned to excavate a full basement below the fellowship hall. (We still have the plans from 1950.)

How I'd love to travel back in time to know what happened and why they didn't pursue those plans. Or what caused them to stop pursuing them. Maybe they started digging and hit ledge, maybe they couldn't raise the money... we just don't know. And it'd be another 16 years before they bought the Parish House. I wonder what those years between 1950 and 1966 were like for the people here.

We had hoped...

But you know, while that church is part of our history, we are not the same congregation. In fact, we're not the same congregation as we were ten years ago even or even five years ago.

It's a poignant place to be - here today - looking back, looking forward. And it might even be a scary place - except for one thing:

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.

When we don't even know it - Jesus is walking right with us! And when we stop and share this meal (the Lord's Supper), he shows himself to us in the most direct way.

You see, this meal reminds us why we're even here at all. This meal is the feast of the risen Lord, in whom all our hope is founded. This meal is God's love spread before us.

For in this bread and this cup, we are sharing Christ. And where Christ is shared - lives are changed. And this isn't just a big dream or a hope to be had, it's a promise to be fulfilled.

Amen.