

What does God require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. — Micah 6:8

Held Together for 125 Years

pullen
making a difference
in the world for 125 years

On Sunday, Pullen will mark a major milestone, our 125th anniversary. While I am excited about Bishop Barbara Harris preaching our anniversary sermon, I've never been much on marking anniversaries. Almost by definition, anniversaries compel us to look back and to look ahead. And though looking back and looking ahead are not bad, there is little we can do about the past or the future. Yet, as I think about this anniversary for our church, I feel a bit different about marking this date in our history.

What feels different about marking Pullen's 125th anniversary is the awareness of the difference our church has made in the lives of so many people. By acknowledging this anniversary we are celebrating those impacts and the sustained and sustaining light this church has been for so many people: for Baptists beyond our walls, for the community of Raleigh, and for people across this country and around the world. It's easy to see how John T. Pullen, Edwin McNeill Poteat, W.W. Finlator, Geraldine Cate, Mahan Siler, and Jack McKinney have shone that light; but it is just as clear that this congregation as a whole has been the real light, constant and steady. Yes, we have had extraordinary individuals within this community—named leaders are the public face of Pullen, but it is really the collection of ordinary people over time, doing their individual acts of courage and kindness, that have created the truest witness for Pullen. So many people have sounded the voice of justice and compassion and mercy. And somehow this church has managed to sustain a space that allows that kind of dedicated, persistent focus and remain a safe and encouraging space for lay leaders who have given and continue to give Pullen a prophetic voice. Yes, that is the word that has shaped these 125 years: prophetic. It doesn't mean that we have been able to predict the future or see things that others cannot. It simply means that we have tried to be faithful in speaking a relevant and authentic word for our times.

As I think about the next 125 years, I can't help but think how that prophetic voice will continue to evolve. Which of our children will carry the call to be peacemakers in this world? Who among our youth will carry the cause of racial and gender

equality? What adults among us will nurture relationships in foreign places that we can't even imagine today? What new ideas will shape how we do ministry within and beyond the walls of this building? What cries of the world will catch our attention and cause us to mobilize our resources to respond? As we read God's word, how will we hear it speaking to our times in the here and now?

I guess these are things that one ponders at anniversaries. It's a worthy exercise. No doubt we should be thinking of how our past will shape our future—in what ways our past forms the prologue for the stories of now that we are writing and living. So, for a person who doesn't typically mark anniversaries, I find myself both humbled by the significance of our church's 125th anniversary, and excited for our church as I think about how it will take shape over the next 125 years.

I hope Sunday, December 13, will be a day to celebrate. To celebrate who we are today. To celebrate all the goodness that is embodied in who we are as a church family. I hope we will take the time to celebrate God's spirit that is still guiding us and challenging us. That we will speak words of gratitude for what has been, for what is, and for what will be. I hope we will do that which has held us together for 125 years: worship and celebrate the God who has called us—and continues to call us—to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly on this earth.

—Nancy



Contributions and Pledges Needed

This is the season for traditions, and one of ours at Pullen is to catch up with our budget in December. Please check your records and send in your final 2009 contributions to the church this month. As of the end of November, we were \$71,342 in arrears; if we receive all pledged amounts, however, we will be in good shape as we close out the year.

Also at the end of November, 215 members and friends had pledged 79% of the 2010 budget. If everyone who pledged this year does so again, we will meet our budget goal. Please call Gretchen Staebler, Pullen's Financial & Publications Secretary, or e-mail her at gstaebler@pullen.org, with your pledge.

—Laura Ford