

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

Memories

My decision to leave Pullen has catapulted me backwards across a decade of memories. These images and stories are of every sort and size. Little things that still bring a smile or a sigh. Big things that seemed overwhelming at the time, and hardly less so now. Here are a few memories from these years we have shared.

The Pickle Boycott – When I arrived at Pullen in 2000 some of our members and mission groups were actively involved in the Farm Labor Organizing Committee’s (FLOC) boycott of the Mt. Olive Pickle Company. A decision was made that Pullen would host a town hall meeting on the issue and invite Baldemar Velasquez, the head of FLOC, and Bill Bryan, the President of the Mt. Olive Pickle Company, to present their sides of the issue. State Representative Paul Lubke from Durham agreed to be the moderator for the evening.

The only way I could persuade Bill Bryan to attend the meeting was to promise him it wasn’t an ambush. While most of the people who attended were sympathetic to the boycott against his company, I wanted him to feel like it would be an honest exchange of viewpoints.

On the evening of the meeting, one of the other organizers of the event told me Max Kennedy, the son of Robert Kennedy, was coming and wanted to make some opening remarks. When I met Mr. Kennedy and asked him what he planned to say, he said he was going to endorse the boycott strongly and encourage people to join with him. To his surprise, and frankly to mine, I blurted out, “You can’t do that. I have given my word to Bill Bryan that this isn’t a set-up and if you give the speech you are intending I will be made a liar in the first five minutes of the meeting.”

To his credit, Max Kennedy agreed to forego his speech and proceeded to speak extemporaneously for ten minutes about his late father’s relationship with Cesar Chavez. It was very moving and set the right tone for the rest of the night.

Several years later the pickle boycott was settled between FLOC and Mt. Olive. Bill Bryan sent Pullen several cases of pickles as a way of acknowledging our role in the resolution of the conflict. For several Wednesday night dinners we had good pickles for hors d’oeuvres.

Zimbabwe - The chance to go to Zimbabwe in 2006 with Bonnie Dixon and our young adult group fulfilled a long-time dream of seeing Africa. The main purpose of our trip was to help build a 300,000 gallon cistern that would provide water for the Baptist Conference Center and Baptist Theological Seminary. Bonnie arranged for me to teach a course on the ethics of pastoral counseling and ministry at the seminary while we were there.

In preparation to teach the course, I was told that there

would likely be 10-15 students and we would meet for a couple of hours each morning. To my surprise, on the first day of class there were fifty people present. Their energy, questions, and willingness to talk openly about the challenges facing clergy in Zimbabwe with the political crisis and AIDS epidemic meant that two hours was hardly enough time. Each day we went as long as my voice and stamina would allow, which was usually closer to four hours.

With Bonnie’s recent stroke my mind is lingering on the amazing work she has done in Zimbabwe over the years. I am grateful that I was able to be part of one of those trips.

Baptisms – Most Pullenites know what a special day Easter is in our church. The early-morning baptism service is one of the best parts of that day. Listening to the statements of each baptismal candidate brings tears, laughter, and a deep appreciation for the rich diversity of faith found in our congregation. Having the privilege of baptizing both of my children means that service will always be a favorite memory.

Doing baptisms in the old Finlator Hall presented a few challenges. The baptistery had no drain and no means for heating the water, so it was a lot of work to get the thing filled and drained (and a cold welcome into Christ’s Church for those getting dunked). Somehow, all of those factors added to the charm of the experience.

Several years ago Chris Kelly was baptized. Chris is taller than ninety-nine percent of the population, and the tight quarters of the old baptistery had me awake at night with images of Chris’s head hitting one of the concrete corners as he went backwards under the water. Fortunately, my worst fears were not realized and the first aid kit wasn’t necessary after all.

These are three of thousands of memories I carry in my soul. The richness and grace of these experiences make me profoundly grateful for my years at Pullen. What a ride it has been.

—Jack

Congregational Meeting

A regularly scheduled congregational meeting will be held on Sunday, October 18 in Finlator Hall immediately following worship. Refreshments will be provided. The agenda for the meeting includes consideration of:

- Proposal from the Personnel Committee to reduce hours for the Minister with Children & Their Families
- 2010 Proposed Budget

A copy of both proposals was mailed from the church on October 6. Please notify the church as soon as possible if you need childcare for this meeting.

—Becky Overstreet