

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

The Art of Racing in the Rain

Some things are constant. Pullen's archives shed light on what some of those things are for our church. It seems from the beginning we have dealt with leaky roofs, knowing how to staff our programs and ministries, meeting our expenses at the end of the year and pledging our budget for the new year (see the box below). I guess these issues are not that uncommon for institutions, especially non-profits. Well, maybe not the leaky roof. But I imagine that for institutions dependent on charitable contributions there is always anxiety from year-to-year about how to sustain financial health and stability. As I talk with other pastors, our story is not unique. Most churches struggle with these issues and much more so in this time of economic uncertainty.

One of things that I have come to believe over time is that we have the power to change our story. Instead of repeating the same storyline year after year, there is always the possibility of rewriting the drama. Robert Frost's poem comes to mind as I think about where we are as a church. He writes,

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
and that has made all the difference.

We are at a place of opportunity to consider a new direction—to think more clearly and long-term about our financial health, to change the way it's "always been," and to consider

how each one of us participates in all aspects of nurturing our church family so that we can be as healthy as possible.

This past year, I read a novel that made me consider a different approach to living. In the book, *The Art of Racing in the Rain* by Garth Stein, Denny is an up and coming racecar driver. Through Denny, Enzo the dog (who is actually telling the story), learns a great deal about the human condition. One can learn, he discovers, that through using the techniques needed on the racetrack, one can successfully navigate all of life's ordeals. One of Enzo's most significant learnings is that "your car goes where your eye goes." Is that not true for all of life, not just behind the wheel of a car?

There is no doubt that we have several challenges facing us in 2010—challenges that are not new. However, we have an opportunity now to create a new storyline by focusing our eyes on where we want our church to go. If our eyes simply focus on our challenges as difficulties, rather than opportunities, we will stay in familiar patterns that are not necessarily healthy for our life together. But if we allow our eyes to follow our hopes and desires, maybe, just maybe, we will be at our best as a church—doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God.

The larger church community has always looked to Pullen to be a prophetic voice in the world—to challenge the status quo, to offer hope in times of despair, and to model a way of being church that follows the way of Christ. It is my hope that we will keep our eyes on such a vision. After all, the car goes where our eyes go.

—Nancy

Financial Update

Pullen ended 2009 with a significant deficit of more than \$40,000. While annual expenses were within our budget, December contributions and pledge payments were down quite a bit from recent years. Since the deficit was announced on January 3, however, many people have completed their pledge payments and others have made special contributions. Once again, we have ended the past year with a small surplus.

It is now time to turn our attention to the 2010 budget. We have received pledges for 86% of the budget but still need \$82,000 in pledges to make the 95% goal. (We anticipate the other 5% will be received through unpledged contributions, such as Sunday collections). If you are able and have not yet made your 2010 pledge, please do so right away. None of us wants to decrease this year's budget at our February business meeting, so please help reach our target.

—Laura Ford, Treasurer

Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Service

Martin Street-Pullen Memorial
Baptist Churches

Sunday, January 17, 2010;

4:00 PM

Pullen Memorial Baptist Church

Rev. Dr. Earl Johnson,
Martin Street pastor, preaching.

*A light meal and program
will follow the service.*