

“I Dream a Church”

Acts 2:42-45 and 4:32-33

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Lake Highlands Presbyterian Church

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his [or her] own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. . . And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

The picture Luke paints of the very earliest gatherings of the church is a picture of a dream. Do you know this church? Have you seen it in action? Have you glimpsed its delight? It is God's church, as it OUGHT to be, as it CAN be, and as it WILL be.

As I come to live and work alongside you, to teach and to preach, to teach and to pastor, I dream a church.

I dream a church with doors flung wide open, where all who enter meet the living God. A church with transforming worship, powerful preaching, marvelous music.

I dream for Mildred. For Mildred, who knows the Apostles' Creed by heart and can recite it in her sleep. Mildred, who worries about losing the old traditions, who already lost her husband, whose children are far away.

And I dream for Joe and Gabrielle, whose lives are so full to the brim, but who are still searching nonetheless. Whose work and family obligations pull them in so many directions there is little time for reflection or rest.

And for Lamar, whose young mind flits from one thing to the next. Lamar, often bored in worship, needing a challenge. Asking questions, wondering about life and God and what it all means.

I dream a noisy church. A church with babies and children, teenagers and Gen Xers, adults of all ages, saints in their later years. A church where the carpets need to be cleaned often because there is so much going on in the Fellowship Hall, in the CDC halls, in the sanctuary.

But there's more.

In my dream, I see hospitality and healing, generosity and giving. A place where needs are met and good things shared. Where the lonely, single mother finds support and wise advice. Where those struggling with chronic illness find comfort. Where the able-bodied work and play and sit at table alongside those who need more tending. I see a grateful church, a church serving the bread of life and the cup of joy.

There's still more.

I see a church that challenges the mind, opens the heart, and feeds the soul. A place of learning and inquiry for everyone, from the very smallest to the very eldest. I dream of dialogue and struggle, of laughter and tears, of growth and maturity.

I dream for Rosa, who has never stepped foot in a church before. That Rosa will be invited to join us, and will see how we love one another. And I dream for Robert, disenchanted with what he always knew as church. Robert, who you know only comes on Christmas and Easter. I dream Robert will re-discover his place among us, or find it for the first time.

And for all those people in Lake Highlands who have no idea what the word Presbyterian means. I dream we might show them Christ in our midst.

I dream a church. A church who wrestles with issues of the day. A church concerned with how we live outside church. With justice and care for God's creation. A church that embraces those in need, those who have not, **and** those who have much, but do not yet know what they are missing. A church that says "yes" more often than "no".

Oh, you may say, "Such a church is impossible!" But I know this dream is possible. I know we will wake up and the dream will continue. I know because I have heard about you.

I have heard how three former congregations came together; how the Spirit breathed new life into you. How you did it with care, planning, and respect. How you came together and over time your differences

diminished. I have heard you are a congregation that does things, not just talks about them. I like that. How you have grown with new worship, welcoming young people here. This is new life that attracts more new life.

I know my dream is true here, because I have heard of Claire. Claire, whose name I have changed, but whose face you will recognize in many around you. Claire, who says “yes” nearly all the time to people in need. Claire, whose grace-filled hospitality feeds you.

I know this dream is real, because you have told me of William. William, whose retirement is so full serving others, he needs a vacation. There are many Williams, I suspect, silently serving among you.

I know all this already, in only three short months, and only from a distance. I have had only a glimpse.

This dream is real. I see it in your faces. I feel it in this sanctuary. You know it, too. Mildred, Joe and Gabrielle, Lamar. Rosa and Robert, Claire and William. They may not know they know it yet, but they know.

An impossible dream? Not at all. Our dream is possible because it is, finally, God who makes all good things--- and all great things--- possible. It is possible because you and I know God. God who continues to breathe new life into old, who brings us together in surprising ways, who inspires our praise and our worship, who feeds us at the Lord’s Table and the reception table and at our dinner tables.

I dream a church. God’s church.

Dream it---and live it ---with me.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.