BUFFALO UNITED METHODIST
So All May Know Joy

Sun May 17 - Formed and Freed | 1 Timothy 4:6 -16

Last Sunday during Confirmation, the older generation was pouring it out into the younger generation, our lesson plan from our Confirm curriculum was on the local church.

As we celebrate our volunteers, we do have a good team of adults mentoring our confirmands, passing on faith.

In fact, being involved in Confirmation helps me see this truth, which is also our focus this morning: one of the greatest gifts a church can give is when one generation pours faith, wisdom, encouragement, and room to grow into the next generation. And every generation needs that.

Every generation…kids, high school, college, young adult, 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's, 90's…every generation needs being formed in the faith and given the freedom to thrive in their own way in following Christ.

In last Sunday's class about the local church, I asked about their first memory of coming to church here and had they ever gone to other churches? And I started talking a little about our church's history.

I kicked it off in a small way, showing this slide, of our first church location down 1st street. Here it is a big white apartment building. It definitely looks like it was a church at one point. Kind of interesting…

Then I asked if they knew about our 140/40 Celebration? Did they know about our church's 100 years in two different locations and then 40 years in this building? Were they aware that we are preparing to celebrate God's faithfulness to us this October?

In fact, I told the kids I needed some help to come up with questions to ask you in the months to come.

I asked them to come up with questions they were interested in learning the answers to. Would you like to hear a few of their questions?

- First question, How many pastors have we had?
- How long has our church had a band?
- Did we ever have a choir? What was that like?
- How often have we changed our name? In 1886 we were called, The Methodist Episcopal Congregation. And then in 1939 it was changed to…it's a long one: The Dewey Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church.
- Here's my favorite, Of all the other choices you had for churches, what made you stick with this church?

Grateful for their help and I look forward to hearing your stories.

But do you know what truly made the morning come alive?

It was when our wonderful guest speaker…she's on your right, recognize her? It's Robin Anderson. And she came bringing more pictures and plenty of fun stories about this church.

Robin brought this picture, our last church location. This brick building built in…

And then it was from this location, that 40 years ago many in this church walked to our present location, as part of a special dedication and consecration Sunday in their new church.

So fun to hear her stories!

I believe that God is doing something extra special in our midst, stirring up our memories and helping us listen to each other share stories. Powerful stuff!

What Robin did for us that morning is actually deeply biblical.

- Simeon and Anna for Joseph, Mary and Jesus
- Eli for Samuel
- And now Paul for Timothy.

Let's dig into 1 Timothy 4:6-16.

Timothy is a younger man that Paul is encouraging through letters. Scholars believe he was a little shy. But can you imagine having Paul for a mentor or a friend? Paul would have been so intimidating.

Yes, Timothy wrestled with his calling, his gifts and abilities. And many of us know what that feels like. Most of us know what it feels like to question our gifts. Am I too young? Too old? What are my gifts? Do my gifts matter?

I have shared some of my struggles of understanding my gifts, wrestling with whether I was the right gender? When I first came to faith in Jesus and sensed a call on my life for ministry, I had never seen a female pastor. How could I be sensing a call to ministry?

Some of us have even been in communities where our gifts went unnoticed or unaffirmed. That can wound or stunt our relationship with God, with others, and even with the church itself.

Which is exactly why we need people like Paul — people who call out the gifts in us before we can fully see them ourselves. I remember being so hungry to discover my gifts. I could see other people's gifts so clearly. But when I tried to see my own, it was like a huge fogbank would roll in.

And on top of often a painful self-discovery process and stumbling in developing our own gifts, sometimes, we then forget others.

We forget our responsibility to recognize, affirm and encourage the growth of gifts in one another. Sometimes, we forget to affirm peer to peer and across generations.

Are you picking up what I am laying down?

We all need mentors, we never outgrow our need for encouragers, reminding us all that we do have a role to play.

We see Paul doing this, affirming Timothy in 1 Timothy, especially in chapter 4 verses 14 through 16. Paul stresses the importance of Timothy following his own process and gifts when he wrote:

"Do not neglect the gift that is in you…," and when he said, **"devote yourself, so that all may see your progress,"** and **"pay close attention to yourself and to your teachings**."

Paul was also raising and mentoring a young leader in this passage. Timothy was a young pastor. Which is another one of our tasks as a congregation. When people, especially young people, have gifts that are different or unsettling like leaders, these gifts are sometimes ignored, neglected, or even disparaged.

But Paul tells Timothy to not let anyone dismiss him because he was young or let himself get discouraged in growing as a leader and pastor.

So, how can we follow Paul's exhortation? What could we get better at in encouraging rather than forgetting the gifts of all, especially preparing the young people to take on significant responsibility in the church?

We might be tempted, and I have heard this a few times here, the "we've always done it this way" mentality. If we are allowing young people to live out their own gifts, we cannot force them to do everything the way it's always been done.

We need new leaders with new ways of doing things.

For one, they weren't here to see how things were. They weren't alive or part of this church to see and experience what you loved. They will have to create their own way.

And we will have to scooch over a bit, and make room for their different ways of seeing and doing things.

Sometimes we assume leadership belongs to people with decades of experience. But a 34-year-old Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and helped move the conscience of a nation.

He was so young.

But Eli and Samuel remind us, the church must never dismiss what God can do through young voices.

How do we raise up leaders in the spirit of King's dream and raise up leaders like Timothy, who used their voices to live out the gospel faithfully and practice their calling?

And then lastly, have we thought through what could happen if we don't invest in them? Have we thought about what might happen if we fail to help them build a strong Biblical foundation in their lives?

Amy Austin shared a great story with us as staff this week. She typed it up so I could share it. Here is her story, underscoring the need to help the next generation hear and understand stories from the Bible.

My daughter and I had just finished watching the first episode of *The Chosen*. We sat together on the couch, still thinking about the scene where Jesus cast the demons out of Mary Magdalene.

It was intense and emotional, sticking with us after we turned the tv off.

Then my daughter looked over at me and asked, "Was that Jesus's first miracle?"

I knew the answer, but instead of just telling her, I replied, "Well, let's Google it." So, we sat side by side while I read this out loud off my phone:

"No, the healing of Mary Magdalene from seven demons was not recorded as Jesus's first miracle. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus's first miracle was turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana. While Jesus did cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene, Luke 8:2, the Bible does not explicitly place that event at the beginning of His ministry."

When I finished reading, my daughter got very quiet.

She stared off for a moment, like she was deeply processing this profound biblical information. Then, with complete seriousness, she looked at me and asked: "Why do you think Luke ate two demons?"

I froze. What!?

She said, "You just said so, Luke ate two.

It took me a moment but then I realized what had happened.

I hadn't said, "While Jesus did cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene, Luke chapter 8, verse 2."

So, what she heard was, "While Jesus did cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene. Luke ate two."

Bri didn't process it as Luke, chapter 8 verse 2. So, she was trying to figure out why Luke was apparently out there eating demons.

We laughed so hard about that. And I am glad we were able to clear that up.

That moment stuck with me for a different reason. How often our faith is best passed on through ordinary relationships, simple conversations, and sometimes clarification. Questions, misunderstandings, laughter, and learning together.

So, true. Thank you, Amy Austin for sharing!

That evening on the couch learning about Jesus and laughing just proves our point. We need the older pouring into the younger, explaining God, life, and scripture.

Otherwise, we have people walking around wondering about Luke, the demon eating apostle.

As I close, here are at least two ways you could respond to today's sermon and pour into the next generations.

One, we have a sheet of questions in the Entry Way. These questions are all about your experiences in this church. Take them home, write out the answers, bring them back. If you want an electronic copy emailed to you talk to Michelle in the front office.

And then another shout out for the 140/40 Committee meeting after the Pancake Breakfast today. Please join this committee. Share your ideas of how we can make the whole month of October special in remembering God's faithfulness to BUMC.

Because your stories are not just memories. They are part of the faith we are handing forward.

The next generation needs more than a nice church building. They need people willing to share their faith, their stories, their encouragement, and their seat at the table. Amen.

Time of Reflection:

1. Who are the people who have poured faith, wisdom, encouragement, or guidance into your life — and how might God be calling you to do the same for someone else?

2. Are there gifts in yourself or in someone from a younger generation that you may have overlooked, doubted, or not fully encouraged yet? What would it look like to make room for those gifts to grow?