

THE YEAR WAS 1984, THE DATE WAS APRIL 1ST. UP UNTIL THIS POINT A DAY MORE COMMONLY RECOGNIZED AS APRIL FOOL'S DAY. INTO AN EMPTY OFFICE MOVED THE NEW REVEREND DUNN. A QUIET MAN, NOT TOO TALL, NOT TOO SHORT...A NICE LOOKING MAN. HE UNPACKED HIS BELONGINGS AND BEGAN TO CREATE HIS SPACE. TO GIVE IT HIS PERSONALITY. ON THE WALLS HE HUNG HANDCRAFTED STITCHERIES MADE BY HIS WIFE AND MOUNTED IN FRAMES MADE BY A CARPENTER, OF SORTS. EVENTUALLY HIS DESK HELD A PICTURE OF TWO SONS, MARK JR. AND DAVID. HE FILLED HIS SHELVES WITH BOOKS. BOOKS WITH TITLES YOU WOULD EXPECT TO FIND IN A MINISTER'S OFFICE...UNTIL YOU CAME TO THE COTTONPATCH BIBLE. NOW THE OFFICE BELONGED TO HIM. MARK HAD ARRIVED.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MEMORIES GATHERED IN OUR HEARTS AND MINDS THAT WE CAN CALL UP WHEN WE MISS HIM AND NEED TO HAVE HIM BACK FOR A FEW MINUTES IN OUR MIND IF NOT IN PERSON. WELL, LET'S SEE...

-MARK BEGAN SERVING FIRST CHURCH IN APRIL OF '84. THAT'S 7 YEARS X 52 WEEKS = 364 WEEKS, MINUS 28 WEEKS OF VACATION = 336 WEEKS OR 2,352 WORK DAYS. NOW, FOR EACH WEEK HE WORKED, SUBTRACT 2 DAYS TO GIVE YOU A 5-DAY WORK WEEK. SO FAR HE HAS WORKED 1,680 DAYS. TO BE REALISTIC, HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN SICK A DAY OR TWO, OR OUT OF TOWN AT MEETINGS, BUT HE ALSO PUT IN EXTRA HOURS SO I HAVE LEFT HIS WORKING DAYS AT THAT FIGURE. MARK, AT A CONSERVATIVE FIGURE OF 4 CUPS OF COFFEE PER DAY, I ESTIMATE YOU HAVE CONSUMED 6,720 CUPS OF COFFEE. IF, PERCHANCE YOU DRINK 6 CUPS PER DAY, THE TOTAL RISES TO A STAGGERING 10,080 CUPS. THE LOCAL MCDONALDS WILL NO DOUBT

SHOW A DECREASE IN THEIR PROFITS COME JUNE.

-AND SPEAKING OF COFFEE, AT TWO CUPS A RUN, I WOULD HAVE WORN THE CARPET RIGHT OFF THE FLOOR BETWEEN YOUR OFFICE AND THAT LITTLE TILED ROOM AROUND THE CORNER.

-AS I CONTEMPLATED THIS CHURCH WITHOUT MARK, I BEGAN TO VISUALIZE IT IN TERMS OF 'LOST AND FOUND'. WE FOUND NOT ONLY A WARM AND WONDERFUL PERSONALITY TO JOIN OUR STAFF, WE FOUND A WHOLE NEW LANGUAGE. AT FIRST I THOUGHT HE SPOKE IN 'TONGUES', BUT THEN DISCOVERED IT WAS JUST "GEORGIAN". WHEN HE ARRIVED AND WE WOULD HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK, I EITHER FOUND MYSELF SPEAKING SLOWLY AND LOUDLY THINKING THAT WOULD MAKE THE CONVERSATION MORE EASILY UNDERSTOOD, OR MORE TO MY EMBARRASSMENT, I WOULD UNCONSCIOUSLY RESPOND IN A PSEUDO-SOUTHERN ACCENT. OVER THE YEARS WE HAVE BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO HIS ACCENT, BUT THERE ARE STILL TIMES WHEN I FIND MYSELF WANTING TO SAY...COULD YOU SPELL THAT PLEASE. HIS ACCENT MAY HAVE LOST SOME OF IT'S, BUT NEVER IT'S CHARM.

-WE ARE AGING AT THE SAME RATE, BUT I SEEM TO NOTICE THINGS ABOUT OTHERS MORE THAN I DO ABOUT MYSELF...MARK, I SEEM TO NOTICE THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE LOST A LITTLE OF THE HAIR ON YOUR HEAD, BUT THAT'S OK BECAUSE YOU HAVE FOUND IT ON YOUR CHIN. HOWEVER, ON YOU IT LOOKS GOOD!

-OH YES, YOU MUST HAVE FOUND A NEED FOR A LITTLE HELP IN THE OPTICAL DEPARTMENT. I HOPE THAT NORTH CAROLINA HAS LOTS OF WALGREEN STORES SO YOU WILL BE ABLE TO READ YOUR SERMONS THROUGH THOSE FUNNY LITTLE GOLD WIRE-RIMMED GLASSES. JUST IN CASE YOU THINK HALF-GLASSES DON'T COUNT, YOUR WRONG.

BIFOCALS OR LITTLE READING LENSES, GLASSES ARE GLASSES!

-MARK HAS EITHER FOUND A LARGE COLLECTION OF BIG RED AND WHITE MUGS...OR LOST HIS ONE AND ONLY IN EVERY CONCEIVABLE CORNER OF THE CHURCH. ABOUT THE ONLY PLACE IT HASN'T TURNED UP IS IN THE LADIES ROOM.

-WHEN THE WAUWATOSA POLICE DEPARTMENT HEARD THAT YOU WERE LEAVING, THEY TOOK UP A COLLECTION TO HAVE YOUR SHOE BRONZED. IS IT TRUE THAT YOU SUFFER FROM A HEAVY RIGHT FOOT???

-I ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT YOU HAVE FOUND MANY A CONGREGATIONALIST WILLING TO DEVELOP THEIR BISCUIT 'SOPPING' SKILLS TO A LEVEL WORTHY OF CANE PATCH SYRUP, BUT THAT YOU MAY HAVE LOST THE BATTLE TO HAVE THE LOCAL FRIDAY NIGHT FISH FRY REPLACED WITH A GOOD GRITS NIGHT.

-AND MARK, I WANT YOU TO KNOW WE BOOKED A GUEST SPEAKER FOR THIS MORNING BUT HE WAS UNABLE TO MAKE IT...HE HAD EVERY INTENTION OF BEING HERE BUT WHEN HE HEARD THAT DIANA ACCIDENTLY PUT HIS NAMESAKE IN THE DRYER, LOUIS GIZZARD SAID TO TELL YOU HE WAS SORRY BUT HE HAD A PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT.

-THE DUNNS HAVE FOUND A FEW OTHER THINGS ALONG THE WAY. THEY FOUND MARK JR. IN 1969 AND DAVID IN 1972. SOME OF US HAVE HEARD THAT CHILDREN COME FROM A CABBAGE PATCH - I SUPPOSE YOU FOUND YOURS IN A COTTON PATCH.

-I CAN'T IMAGINE THAT THIS CHURCH WILL EVER FIND ANYONE WHO IS MORE CREATIVE WITH THE TITLES OF THEIR SERMONS THAN YOU. YOU HAVE PREACHED ABOUT WET HENS, SNAKES, TURKEY LEG'S, BABY SHOWERS, EYE DROPS, SKUNKS, AND WATER BEETLES. YOU HAVE WALKED BACKWARD INTO THE FUTURE, LOOKED BELIEF IN THE EYE,

ADJUSTED THE VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL HOLD, PASSED THE BUCK,
CRITICIZED THE CRITIC, WANTED A WINDOW SEAT, AND BLOWN UP A
CONFESSIONAL!

I COULD GO ON BUT IT'S TIME FOR A SERIOUS MOMENT.

YOU CAME TO US WITH YOUR WARMTH, YOUR CHARM, YOUR SOUTHERN
ACCENT AND YOUR FAMILY. YOU BROUGHT MORE THAN YOUR SUITCASE
AND YOUR FURNITURE...YOU BROUGHT LOVE, CARING AND COMPASSION.
YOU HAVE TOUCHED THE LIVES AND HEARTS OF MANY IN A WAY THAT
WILL BE LONG REMEMBERED. I BELIEVE THAT I SPEAK NOT ONLY FOR
THE PARTNER PROGRAM AND THE GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP, BUT FOR ALL
THE MEMBERS OF FIRST CHURCH WHO HAVE COME TO KNOW YOU AND TO
LOVE YOU. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A LITTLE NICHE IN OUR HEARTS
THAT BELONGS TO MARK DUNN ALONE. AND FOR THOSE WHOM YOU HAVE
VISITED WITH OVER THE YEARS, THE NICHE MIGHT BE BETTER
DESCRIBED AS A GAPING HOLE. THESE PAST FEW YEARS HAVE BEEN
BUSY FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY AND WE CONGRATULATE BOTH YOU AND
DIANA ON YOUR DEGREES. YOU HAVE FOUND DIRECTION AND MEANING
FOR YOUR LIVES AND WE ALL WISH YOU SUCCESS AS YOU FOLLOW THE
STARS YOU HAVE CHOSEN. YOU HAVE FOUND NEW HORIZONS TO
CONQUER AND WE ARE LOOSING GOOD FRIENDS. WE WISH YOU SUCCESS
AND GOD'S SPEED IN THE DAYS AHEAD. YO'ALL COME BACK NOW
WHENEVER YOU CAN, YA HEAR.

Jan Burgess'

Farewell to

Mark

5/19/91

