

LET THERE BE LIGHT!
January 28, 2018 –Congregational Meeting Sunday
Genesis 1: 1-8 & John 1: 9
The Church of the Covenant

We know God is a baseball fan because HE begins the first book of the Bible “IN THE BIG INNING”. We know He’s fonda His Honda because as the Bible says, “The disciples were all in one accord.” And we know that there were a couple of Presbyterian ministers present at creation because God created out of chaos and who do you think was there to create the chaos?

But this is a sermon on creativity and whence it cometh. God speaks a creative WORD there at creation as is recorded in Genesis. The earth at one point was “without form or void” and “darkness was on the face of the deep.” The “Spirit of God” was moving over the face of the waters (Genesis 1: 2) So there is darkness and an absence of light. There is nothing-ness. But there is the Spirit of the One true and Living God moving over the face of what will be creation. God speaks a WORD. This is the creative act. God speaks and it happens. This is a creative WORD. This is a dynamic, life-giving WORD. God says “Let there be light”. And there is light. And the darkness flees away as darkness must always do. There is the SPIRIT of the Living God. three combine there is creativity. If it is so for God it is so for us. See, there is a creative power at work in the universe still. There is a creative power for your life. How does it work?

Some of the most creative people ever are Christians. I always think of a previous pastor at First Presbyterian Church in downtown Pittsburgh, Dr. Maitland Alexander. He refused to abandon downtown Pittsburgh when many churches were moving out to the suburbs of Oakland. He organized his entire church around Sunday School; every person was assigned to a Sunday School Class; every person had a fellowship group. On Sundays more than 2,000 people were in the Sunday School –children, youth and adults. He bought Ligonier Camp and Conference Center, beginning the idea of Christian Camping ministry. It is one of the largest Christian Camps in the United States to this day. He invented children’s choir programs the Boy’s Club, and the Men’s Bible Study that would garner 800 people in attendance on a Tuesday. He tore down the old church building fronted on Wood Street and dug up the Colonial burying ground (I’d love to have been in the session meeting that approved that one!) and built one of the most magnificent gothic cathedral churches in the nation, replete with 13 Tiffany Stained Glass Windows. He plunked down Sunday School Chapels throughout the new immigrant communities in Pittsburgh and first children came and then adults; these are the people who still love old First Church. In his spare time he was elected Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. And, oh by the way, he got bored and decided to found Allegheny General Hospital and served as its Chairman for 42 years. Man, that’s tapping into creativity. That’s cutting edge. That’s the Spirit, combining with the WORD, combining with LIGHT to create something miraculous and amazing. Historically, that’s who Presbyterians are. We are light filled creators. We are undaunted when others say impossible. We know that through the Spirit of God ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE. The Holy Spirit and the WORD and Light and the Power of God combined are unstoppable. We have the responsibility to speak creative WORDS into our world in Jesus’ name. We have responsibility to bring God’s light into the world’s darkness. All the mighty power of God is ours in Jesus Christ and that is the internal tape we need to play to ourselves and speak out into our world. Let there be LIGHT! Let the darkness flee. Let the chaos crumble. Let there be light!

But some people choose to exercise that power negatively, not creatively. Some people obviously think they’ve been appointed on the face of the earth to critique what other people are trying to do. Words are creative. Words edify. Words lift up. Words encourage. OR words tear down. Words have destructive power. Negative words can thwart even the most optimistic of people, filled with the Spirit of God, and endeavoring to bring God’s creative light alive into the world. That’s the power of Words. That’s the point of

the Genesis story we just read. Power in the WORD and power in God's WORD. God's WORD is positive and constructive and life-giving and creative. What are your words like? How do you choose to exercise your power? The New Testament book of James tells us of the negative power of dark and destructive words. Read generally Chapter three in the Book of James, but he notes: "And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world...But no human being can tame the tongue...(He calls it) a restless evil, full of deadly poison." (James 3: 6-8) By the way, James also speaks of "faith without works is dead". People who invest their lives in being a critic, gossip, stirrer up of the pot, these people are lazy, because it is easier to criticize someone else than it is to actually motivate yourself to do something of significance with your life. Critics will look back on their life and go, "Gee, I accomplished nothing." Speak the creative WORD, in the power of God's Holy Spirit, and watch what God can do through your life. So, do you want your life to have meaning and significance? Speak the creative WORD. Let there be LIGHT!

Speaking of creativity, our forebears who originally built this church were people of amazing WORDS and amazing DEEDS. James would be proud. Their faith was not dead but filled with mighty works. The sanctuary was built in 1929, the year the Great Depression hit the United States. Those people forged ahead. They sacrificed. Some of them even mortgaged their homes to build this church. They could have listened to the negative words telling them that it was foolish to proceed with a project of this magnitude at the height of the Great Depression. Build something cheap; do something that won't even last one lifetime. No way! They spoke a different WORD; they spoke a creative WORD; they lived their faith and they spoke words consistent with that faith. The stained glass windows alone cost \$34,000 in 1929, a princely sum. We have been speaking with stained glass window experts and to recreate the stained glass in the sanctuary would cost at least \$3.2 million today. These were people who wanted the best; nothing shoddy or second rate for the Lord Jesus. My UTMOST for His highest. Time to reclaim that again, my beloved. This would be a church building reflective of the magnificence of our Creator, done in self-sacrificial love because of the perfect love we have received in Jesus Christ. That's our legacy; that's the gift we have received from them.

Funny thing about stained glass though. Its nothing without light. Plunged in darkness we couldn't see even one thing. Anything of creative beauty in our life, anything of love or of God, requires the light of the world to make it shine. Without creativity it would just be so much worthless shards of broken glass. Without light it would have no value at all.

Jesus IS the WORD spoken at creation. The Word was with God and the Word was God, as the gospel writer John notes as he recapitulates the Genesis creation story at the beginning of John 1. Jesus was spoken out into the world and the darkness fled. Jesus was spoken out into the world and order came out of chaos, creation out of nothing. Jesus was spoken out into the world and that which is nothing becomes something because of HIM. Jesus is the light of the world. In HIM was life and this is the light of men. The WORD became flesh in our flesh and we become something because of HIM. Our life has creative power within it because of HIS life alive in us.

You decide the kind of life you want to have. You decide the kind of church you want to be a part of. You decide the kind of world you want to live in. And, friend, it all begins with the words you speak, what comes out of your mouth and what comes out of your heart.

John 1: 9 says this, and with this I conclude –*"The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world,"* Jesus the light of the world is here today. Let there be LIGHT! Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*