

“Homecoming Sunday 2015” at Beulah UMC

The Beulah United Methodist Church has had a wonderful core leadership of 8-10 people for the past few years. The church has had numerous funerals and folks who have moved into extended care facilities (ECF). Attendance has been as low as 6 and as high as 17 in the past several months.

This past summer, the idea of having a fall homecoming was discussed and put on the calendar. Sunday, October 18, became the target date for “Homecoming Sunday 2015.” Names and addresses were collected for 80 individuals and families who had connected with the church in the past in any fashion and were still alive. A post card, “Save the Date” was sent out in mid-August to everyone on the list inviting them to come and connect or reconnect with others on that special day. The post card promised a follow-up letter which gave details regarding the guest preacher, a special meal, gifts, a time line, a drawing and special children’s message.

Each person was encouraged to talk up the event, wherever they went and to talk across the normal family lines of communication. In other words, “please don’t just talk to your kids about the event. Talk to others and let them see your excitement.”

A vital part of the preparation was giving each person on the leadership team a printout of 20-25 names of those receiving the letter with the request to pray for these folks by name, every day for at least 4-6 weeks in advance of the event. This pastor knelt often to pray for each of those on the lists by name. By the time we gathered for the event I felt like I was getting to know these people and it was so delightful to finally get acquainted with them.

The “Homecoming Sunday 2015” was truly an outpouring of God’s spirit. Rev. Dwight Bowers a former pastor of Beulah preached a wonderful message. Jim Stewart played the piano. He was exuberant. A wonderful children’s message was shared by Rev. Joanie Schilling. Two long time members shared of the past. One gentleman remembered where the horses had been tied and the outhouses located. Eighty plus Pictures from 1881 to the present, 134 years of legacy, were shared in a time-line video. The powerful Christian song “70 Years Ago” by Twila Paris was played during the time-line video. **Seventy (70) men, women and children gathered for “Homecoming Sunday 2015.”** Two hundred and fifty six non-perishable food items were collected to go to the Open Door in Delta, Ohio. It was truly a kingdom of God experience. The wooden mailboxes were removed from the wall ahead of time so that 4 or 5 people in wheel chairs could have access to the elevator.

People traveled from Detroit and Elyria, Ohio. A ninety-three year old gentleman, living in an extended care facility (ECF) had been telling everyone that he and his wife wanted to go to the Homecoming. His sons from Columbus and Michigan made it happen. The one son shared with me that an employee of the ECF was so convinced that the couple should go that she told her husband that if the family could not make arrangements that they needed to make it happen.

Worship started around 10:45am and the fellowship which was delightful lasted until around 2:30pm. The pictures tell the story. At a follow-up meeting one of the ladies declared, “It exceeded expectation.”

Sharing the story - Rev. Daniel R. Schilling