

PROPER 24, PENTECOST 19, YEAR C, OCTOBER 16, 2022

One hundred years ago in 1922 Warren G. Harding was President of the United States. The Lincoln Memorial was dedicated. A gallon of gas was .25, a dozen eggs .55 and a half gallon of milk cost .28. However, the average yearly net income was \$3,143. The first issue of Readers Digest was published; construction began in the Bronx for Yankee Stadium; and the tomb of Tutankhamen was discovered. Art deco was in style and women wore chemise dresses, high heeled shoes, fur coats and bobbed hair. Men wore wingtip shoes, fedoras, knickerbockers and shiny slicked back hair. Popular slang words at the time were giggle water for liquor and hotsy totsy meant you were attractive. The popular silent movies were Robin Hood, Rags to Riches, and Blood and Sand. Popular songs were My Man, April Showers and Toot Toot Tootsie Goodbye. The first public demonstration of television principles were made and over 500 commercial radio stations were in operation in the US. The first US Aircraft Carrier the USS Langley was commissioned.

Closer to home in 1922 the population of New Jersey was about 3.2 million. The Rt. Rev. Edwin Lines was Bishop of the Diocese of Newark and there were 87 parishes and 54 missions. The 1892 Book of Common Prayer was the one that was used at the time and in 1922 the first revision of that prayer book began at General Convention that would later become the 1928 Prayer Book.

St. Luke's had humble beginnings with services being held in a firehouse. One parishioner recollects that on Palm Sunday she vividly remembers that right next to the altar was a sign that said frankfurters. In 1922 property in Dumont was purchased and construction on the first church started on August 20, 1922 and was consecrated two months later on October 18, 1922 by the Bishop Coadjutor the Rt. Rev. Wilson Stearly. The first church was almost entirely constructed by members of the congregation. It was a small chapel that served also as a meeting hall that had chairs seating about 80 people. A description said the sacristy was 4 x 6 feet, a coat closet was the choir room and a "little front hall which must serve at least four purposes; a parish hall, a Sunday school department and kitchen arrangements that any housekeeper would disown" During the depression, step by step, the mission chapel grew and pews, an electric organ and other items were purchased.

By 1954 St. Luke's had outgrown the little chapel and the Diocese embarked on a new initiative to reach communities not served by the Episcopal Church. The diocese had a survey done of the four contiguous communities of Dumont, Haworth, Cresskill and Demarest that determined it was time to replant St. Luke's. Due to the rise in new housing developments for young growing families, five acres was purchased on this site which would provide ample room for a church, parish hall, rectory, playground and off street parking space.

By the time construction started in 1957 on this building with the estimated cost of \$200,000.00 the population of New Jersey was 5.9 million. The final mortgage the church took on was \$250,000. with the diocese initially giving \$70,000. The organ alone cost \$25,000.00. This church building was consecrated on April 26, 1958 by the Rt. Rev. Leland Stark. Within seven years, St. Luke's applied for parish status which meant it was self sufficient and didn't require diocesan financial help. In May 1965 we were welcomed as a parish into the diocese at the diocesan convention.

Now, to give you an idea what was going on in the world at that time in 1958 Dwight D. Eisenhower was President, a dozen eggs cost .28, a gallon of gas was .24 and a new house cost \$12,750.00. The average yearly income was 4,450.00. 1958 was also the peak year for drive in movie theaters with Vertigo, Gigi and a Touch of Evil the big movies. On TV Gunsmoke, Wagon Train, Have Gun will Travel, The Rifleman and Maverick were the most popular shows. NASA was formed that year and the Soviet Union launched the Sputnik 3 satellite. The first Lego brick was patented in Denmark and the first trans Atlantic passenger jetliner started service between New York and London. Fashion for women included sheath dresses, bangs, bouffant hair while men were into cardigan sweaters, sideburns, motorcycle jackets and greased up hair. Slang words were ankle biter for a child and unreal was exceptional. On the radio, All I have to do is dream, volare, Witch Doctor and I beg of you were popular.

Today New Jersey is home to 9.2 million people with almost 1 million in this county alone. From 1958 to the present St. Luke's has had it's ups and downs. In 2010 Our Saviour Lutheran Church joined with us and even though that relationship was dissolved many of the people still remain. What is most important is that St. Luke's is home for so many people. This building does not make a church, the people do. No matter what may happen, through pandemic and disruptions, the reason St. Luke's means so much to so many is that it is home; a place to not only worship our loving God, but to do so among 'family and friends'. That is a priceless gift. That is what we celebrate today. It is through persistence, prayer, faith and care for one another that makes St. Luke's a home.

In this morning's gospel the widow is persistent in seeking justice for herself. Even though the judge could care less about her and her plight, she nevertheless, continued to pester him everyday. When the judge finally caved into her concerns it was not out of compassion or mercy rather it was the desire to get rid of her because she had become an embarrassment to him.

In this parable Jesus is telling us that because of our faith in God's goodness we should call on God without ceasing. We should never give up praying and being faithful no matter how bleak things may appear to be. Someone once asked Mother Teresa how she could continue to work so hard knowing in her heart that there is no real chance of succeeding in her fight against poverty. She answered, "We are not called to be successful; we are called to be faithful.

It is not the persistent pestering of the widow that makes her the hero in this parable. It is rather her faithfulness, despite being continually rejected and powerless that makes her a hero in this story. She is a living demonstration of faithfulness in the face of insurmountable odds. This widow is a person of immense faith. She believes, continually, despite all odds, despite the indifference and capriciousness of the local judge, that her faith itself is the way for her to be brought into a closer relationship with God and above all else that is what is important.

As people of faith we are also people of hope and, therefore, of courage and persistence. The real gift of this anniversary is not just looking back at the past and what we 've had but looking forward in faith. Looking back, we see a journey with hundreds of people touched by the power of Jesus Christ. Looking forward we know God will be with us no matter what comforting us, loving us and encouraging us to be faithful.

So, persist in telling the stories of St. Luke's and your faith that help us recognize and discern the life-giving breath of God moving through generation after generation. No

matter what the next 100 years brings, we the people of St. Luke's will persevere in our persistence to be a place of inclusivity, a place of welcome, compassion, mercy, a place of love and hope, a place that anyone who walks through those doors will find a faithful family doing our best to live out our faith. Amen.