

We'll Always Be Connected (Colossians 2:2-5)
Cumberland UMC
June 28, 2020

²My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. ⁵For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

Today is the day our relationship changes. At the conclusion of today's message, it will probably be the last one you hear me speak as your pastoral leader. Approximately eight years ago, I was appointed to be your pastoral leader. Over that eight year time span, a lot has occurred. I have witnessed numerous changes in your lives and you have also witnessed a number of changes in my life.

As United Methodist clergy, we know that we are appointed one year at a time and itinerant elders are subject to be appointed anywhere the bishop and cabinet feel like a pastor can be used to assist a congregation or congregations within the annual conference. You will have your memories of my tenure here and I will likewise have mine. The one thing that is certain for both sides is, we will always be connected. Recently, a church I previously served celebrated its 35th church anniversary. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the pastor who helped to start that church was asked to provide words of reflection to the current church family. In listening at the founding pastor, I was reminded of some early historical information that helped the church move from a thought to an actual chartered community of faith.

When the founding pastor concluded his remarks for this church's 35th church anniversary, a series of pictures were included in a video presentation of interactions among the church members and pastors throughout the years. Yes, I was included in several of those pictures and am thankful that I was blessed to be one of the pastors who was privileged to serve that congregation for an extended period of time. Presently, I have the second longest tenure of pastors serving that 35 year old congregation.

All of what I mentioned regarding a previous pastoral appointment is to help me underscore the theme for this my final message as your pastoral leader. I am eight years removed

from that church I referenced earlier but I am still remembered by many of the parishioners still attending that church. The founding pastor of that church is now retired but he is also remembered by persons still attending that church.

A change of pastoral appointment does not change what we have been blessed to share as a faith community. Today, I am encouraged by the writer of the passage of scripture chosen for this message. He similar to me, wanted the persons who made up the Colossian church to be encourage in heart and united in love. He also wanted them to come to a greater understanding of who God was so that they could become mature in their individual walks with God and one another. His motive for desiring these things was to prevent others from negatively influencing persons he had grown to love and care for. Those are characteristics of a good pastoral leader.

Paul the writer, just like me was not perfect. He too had growing edges that God was continuing to help him build upon. Even when he was not with them, his desire for these persons was for them to move higher and higher in the Lord. I too like Paul very soon will be absent from you. I will no longer be appointed as your pastoral leader. That does not mean that I will care for you any less. Church family, we will always be connected!

How will we always be connected one might asked when you have transitioned from this appointment to another appointment? We'll always be connected because we are children of God. We are brothers and sisters in Christ and no amount of distance or transition or change of pastoral appointment will dissolve our connectedness through Jesus Christ. Another way we'll always be connected is when the church's history is read, my name will be attached to the church's history as one of the individuals God has blessed to serve Cumberland. Likewise, when my pastoral appointments are read or listed, Cumberland will be included in the list of churches I was given an opportunity to serve.

Members and friends of Cumberland, another way in which we will always be connected is by our interconnectedness through the works of the Holy Spirit. Wherever we find ourselves, the presence of the Holy Spirit will keep us united together. Lastly, I want to say that prayerfully one of these days when God decides to render judgment to all of humanity, many if not all of us will be able to spend eternity together. We'll always be connected and I thank God for you!