

A Homecoming Celebration

On September 27th, (my Mom's birthday) 2015 the Chapel in the Pines celebrated Homecoming Sunday for the first time in its thirty-one year history. Perhaps, you might ask, "Why did it take thirty-one years for the Chapel leadership to see the benefits of hosting a special Sunday to acknowledge its heritage, to welcome back former members to the church, and to celebrate with visitors and prospective members the direction of the Chapel going forward into the future?"



Remarkably, there is a simple answer to this question. Church historians tell us that religious Homecoming celebrations were a creation of Southern churches going back to the post-Civil war era and did not become somewhat popular in other regions of our country until the 1960's and 1970's. Now, if you will take a quick peak at the twenty-eight founders of our Chapel you will quickly see that for the most part, their roots are anything but "Southern". With this in mind let me share with you a story about the Chapel's first Homecoming.

In 2015 JoAn Moses was in her second year as President of the Chapel Board of Directors and we had a conversation about the Homecoming celebrations we had both enjoyed in our former churches. We spoke about the joy of welcoming back college students and young adults who lived away and were growing their families. We spoke about the joy we saw in the eyes of the seniors when they experienced so many of their church family reunited with one another on Homecoming Sunday.

JoAn was inspired to quickly choose three faithful women of the Chapel to head up the effort to make plans for the Chapel's first Homecoming that would be held the last weekend in September. These wonderful ladies were Helen Simpson, Ann McClymonds, and Gerry Moss. These three were anxious to get started so they asked if I would attend their first planning session and I was honored to oblige. Immediately, it became clear to me that these women grew up in churches that did not celebrate Homecoming and, in fact, they had never attended a Homecoming Sunday in their lives. All three had volunteered to make plans for Homecoming out of their love for JoAn and this Chapel, but they had absolutely no clue what they were planning. You see, none of these ladies were Southerners...it simply was not a part of their church tradition...and they were looking for some guidance.

So, with a chuckle, I called the most Southern woman I knew...I called my wife, Julie, who grew up in the "Low County" of South Carolina and was a veteran of multiple Homecomings. After explaining the predicament, I asked Julie if she would meet with Helen, Ann, and Gerry. After Julie led the ladies on many walks down church memory lane and gave a lengthy tutorial on all things Homecoming, the ladies were off and running and just a few months later Homecoming became a part of the many important, yearly traditions of the Chapel in the Pines.

So, on September 23rd and 24th we who are blessed by God to call this Chapel our "home" will celebrate its 9th Homecoming with all our church family and friends. Homecoming is a time when we welcome many back into our loving arms and remind them that no matter where they are on their life journey that they are also welcomed into the loving arms of Christ. Homecoming is a time to speak of our Chapel's history and to renew old friendships, but it is also a time to give thanks to God for the blessings this church brings into our lives and a time to make new friendships. Homecoming is a time to look to the past, acknowledge the blessings of the present, and dream about the future as we continue to worship and serve God in this place.

The Worship Team, the Mission Team, and the Chapel Men's Fellowship will be our hosts for the events of Homecoming Weekend 2023. You will hear more about the details of this special weekend through the bulletin, the Chapel's website, and Constant Contact emails. But, this is where all of you can really help this year's Homecoming be successful.

We are in the process of sending out an invitation letter to those who have moved away, those who are now in senior living facilities, and those whose faces we haven't seen in quite some time. If you have someone who needs to receive this letter about Homecoming and you want to make sure that we have their names and addresses, please check with Susan in the Chapel office to verify that they are on our list. We want to make sure that no one is left out of the celebration and that the love and joy of Homecoming is shared with everyone.



Peace,
Pastor Paul