



LAKWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rev. Terence A. Lucarelli

October 9, 2016

GENERATIONS OF GENEROSITY

YESTERDAY

Hebrews 13:1-8

The theme for our stewardship month is: *Generations of Generosity*. We'll be delving into the theme a lot, but from the perspective of *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. Where have we *BEEN*? Where are we *NOW*? And where will *BE* on into the future? Those are the questions we'll be addressing in relation to Stewardship.



John Ruskin was hired by the Lakewood Chapel Council in 1952 to come up with a design that would be our first home. Along with the artist's rendering, John Ruskin penned these words:

Only once in a lifetime comes the privilege of helping to build a church that will stand for generations in the community for which it is built...When we build, let us think we build forever. Let it not be for present delight nor present use alone. Let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for; and let us think as we lay stone upon stone, that the time is to come when these stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them, and that men will say as they look upon the labor and the wrought substance of them, "See this our fathers did for us."

"See this our fathers (and mothers) did for us." Today we look back at our *legacy ... a legacy of commitment and love*. Commitment and love of God for sure, and commitment and love for a church family.

How aware are you of our church history? Some of you, I'm sure, know how it all started, but others may not be quite up to speed. Let me give you a little history lesson for a few moments, as we think about *Generations of Generosity: Yesterday*.



Following the decision by the Suwannee Presbytery to establish a church in Lakewood in 1951, a Sunday School was begun in the homes of *three families* on Duke Road: Mr. and Mrs. John Graham, Mr. and Mrs. John Bier and Mr. and Mrs. Jay Gilliland. There were 45 children and adults who attended that first Sunday on Nov. 11, 1951, and they came on *foot* and on *bicycle*. Meetings were held in these homes for several months. South Jacksonville Presbyterian also furnished the founding Sunday School with an adult teacher, its Assistant Minister, C. Charles Benz. A Chapel Council was established on Dec. 9, 1951, and on Jan. 1, 1952, the council extended a call to Reverend Benz to serve as Lakewood Chapel minister.

Twenty-five women attended the first meeting of the Women of the Church on Jan. 15, 1952. Groundbreaking for the chapel's first building took place on February 10, 1952. This first single unit masonry building (that would later be incorporated into the larger facility) was acquired at a cost of \$5,750 for the land and \$8,000 for the building. The space is currently used as our nursery rooms and men's restroom, but was then one large room for worship, and the smaller one for the nursery. The address was 2001 Longwood Road (it had not yet been named University Boulevard).

The following Sunday, the congregation met with the Jacksonville Presbyterian Laymen's Association on the church lot and the Women of the Church served sandwiches, coffee and cake. (We were eating well together from the very beginning!)

Just two months after the ground breaking, on Easter Sunday, April 13, 1952, although there was wind and rain and *no windows*, a capacity crowd jammed into the yet incomplete chapel for the first service of worship in the Lakewood Chapel. A particular atmosphere of *oneness under God* prevailed as people shared umbrellas, raincoats, etc. with the worshippers sitting in window and door areas. Gifts from the new congregation helped provide the necessary items for a Communion service, which was held July 6, 1952.

On Sept. 7, 1952, the Reverend Benz formally accepted the call to be Lakewood's first pastor, and the first Session of the church (just four members, one of whom was John Bier) was installed on the same day at a special 3 p.m. service. The formal service of organization for the church was held on September 21, 1952 ... when Lakewood Chapel became Lakewood Presbyterian Church. The first annual Christmas Candlelight Communion Service was held on December 24, 1952, at 11:30 p.m. with a capacity congregation in attendance.

Four short years later, the congregation had grown from its original 45 attendees to a membership of 412, and on December 8, 1956, plans were presented to the congregation to raise \$75,000 for a sanctuary.

It took three years to raise the money, but in early 1960, construction began on the new sanctuary. On the Sunday before Christmas 1960, a *Florida Times-Union* editorial read,

“A beautiful steeple rises high above the new sanctuary of the Lakewood Presbyterian Church nearing completion in our town. First services in the new house of worship are tentatively scheduled for January 1. This new steeple is a fitting symbol of the holiday season, reminding all of man's universal reaching toward the heavens and of the heights in personal dignity that can be gained through faith.”

The first service was actually held on Sunday, Dec. 25, 1960, a week earlier than had been predicted. According to Charles Benz, there was a tremendous amount of activity among dedicated members in the last few days and even hours to make that happen.

The final paragraph of our history (you can find all of this and so much more on our website) ends with these words:

Lakewood Presbyterian Church continues to grow and evolve. With God's help we will make progress and find the best ways to continue our ministry to this community and to each other:

Thinking with Christ's mind,
Loving with Christ's heart,
Serving with Christ's hands.



Why did I choose this passage of Scripture from Hebrews we read earlier in our service? Let me remind you of a few verses: “*Let mutual love continue.*” “*...for he has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’ So we can say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?’*” And finally, “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*”

Can you see that the *LEGACY* we have inherited is one of *commitment* and *love*?

“*Let mutual love continue.*” The *mutual love* started in John Bier's garage in 1951 with just 45 children and adults ... and grew within 4 years to 412!

“*...for he has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’ So we can say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?’*” God had a reason for placing this church right here all those years ago. And men and women like John and Marge Bier made a *commitment* to God to do whatever was required to bring about God's plan. They were *not afraid* to step out in faith and build one of the most beautiful buildings to house a church family in all of

Jacksonville. *It was through their LOVE and their COMMITMENT ... and yes, their GENEROSITY ... that a dream was realized.*

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” And with Jesus’ help, we can build on our past ... on into the future. Because my friends, Jesus is the same *today* as he was *yesterday* ... and he will be the same *tomorrow* and *FOREVER!*



I thought Linda did an exceptional job in this first stewardship skit by the Troupers. I hope you weren’t so caught up in “Buffalos” that you missed her point. Let me refresh your memory:

BRENNAN: So, Dad, do you think God *called* Scotty and Hornaday to save the buffalo?

BRIAN: What do you think?

BRENNAN: In the Bible God gave Adam and Eve a lot of power over the land and plants and animals.

BRIAN: True. “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’”

AIDAN: And what just occurred to me is, he didn’t give the land or plants or animals any control over their own existence...*People* had the control.

BRENNAN: And that was an enormous responsibility.

BRIAN: And it went way beyond buffalo.

HOPE: Just look at *everything* in the world today...

BRIAN: In our towns and neighborhoods...

BRENNAN: Schools...

AIDAN: Homes...

HOPE: This church...

BRIAN: The church universal...

BRENNAN: The Bible...

BRIAN: The Gospel of Christ...

AIDAN: We have it now because we got it from someone else.

BRIAN: Isaac Newton said in 1676, “If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.”

AIDAN: People who saw problems.

HOPE: And answered God’s call.

BRENNAN: We stand on the shoulders of giants.

BRIAN: Real giants.



Generations of Generosity: Yesterday

“We stand on the shoulders of giants” ... real giants like Mr. and Mrs. John Graham, Mr. and Mrs. John Bier, and Mr. and Mrs. Jay Gilliland.

What will we leave for those who follow us?

Will they be able to say the same for us?

In the words of architect, John Ruskin: *“See this our fathers (and our mothers) did for us.”*

Amen and Amen.