



The Federated Church of Hyannis

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Reverend Derek L. White, Pastor

Weekly Message From the Pastor and Sermon Notes for August 8, 2021.

Over the next several weeks I will be leading a sermon series called “Faith Through Generations”.

Rev. Derek L. White

Sermon: Faith Through the Generations ~ Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:1-10

The Apostle Paul has no record of him having children. In the beginning of 2nd Timothy Paul calls Timothy his son. Scholars believe this to be because Paul was the godfather of Timothy. Paul had baptized Timothy’s grandmother, mother, and Timothy himself. Timothy was a young pastor who rose to be a bishop in the early church. Paul, in his later years, wrote him letters to mentor him and encourage him in the ministry that Timothy was doing to grow the churches. Timothy became like an adopted son to Paul. At the beginning of this letter Paul reflects on how the faith that Paul first shared with Timothy’s grandmother has now been passed down to Timothy as a younger leader in the church. There is a succession within the family that the faith being taught would be shared so it could be passed from generation to generation.

In Judaism, what makes someone Jewish is the connection to the story that has been passed down from the time of Abraham. It is a story about the ancestors and what they faced. It is the wisdom they learned from being a family for thousands of years. And it is how the family has a God who has selected their family to be a chosen family through which the world would come to know about God. It is a story about generations of the family of Abraham and the miracles God has done.

Church historically has been a family affair. Every town had a family church where various generations gathered for communal life with other families that had been part of the church for generations. It is where aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, cousins, grandparents, and distant relatives gathered together on Sunday morning to pray, worship, and eat a meal together after the service. It is where family

members would go to be baptized, married, or have a funeral service. Sometimes special holiday celebrations would happen at the church. There would be cookbooks with favorite recipes from the dinners the church would host. Until the 1970s churches primarily were family churches. But then something happened in the 1980's.

I am part of the Generation X group of kids who grew up during the 80's so I think I can give some perspective on what happened. The American Family started to fall apart. The stock market crashed, divorce became an epidemic, children became latch key kids living home alone while single parents worked to provide. The real estate market began to boom, people relocated all over the country, and religious expression in public settings became taboo. We had MTV, which dramatically changed the way children saw the world. Hollywood made movies that were so vulgar that Barbara Bush introduced the rating system for movies and music with explicit content. Shows like the Simpsons became the persona of the typical American Family, the alcoholic father who beat his children and the mother who did her best to keep the family from being banned from community life. It was when faith in America took a rapid decline. Town sports took over Sunday mornings, and TV Evangelists made religion feel like a commodity. The 80's was the tipping point.

Here I am today, a child of the 80's. The forgotten generation. The generation that many never attended church. The generation where there was no time for discovering faith because the world was constantly on fire. The generation where the faith of our grandparents was what we denominationally identified with because we didn't know what a denomination was. The 80's is when it all began to change.

The Good News is that faith is just as relevant today as it was in the 1950's. The kids of the 80's, 90's, and 2000's still see a place for God in their lives. They are just latch key kids of faith. Church at home with the door locked is what works for many of them. Or church on Sunday morning during a kids sports practice is what works. Or church services on-demand with pre-recorded services is what works. See, the model of the family shifted, so the model of the family church shifted as well.

Paul when he wrote his letters to Timothy knew the challenges Timothy would face would be different than the challenges Paul faced. The Church dramatically changed during Paul's life. What remained the same was the Gospel which was given to Paul and then passed on through generations to Timothy. The Church may change, but the Gospel still remains the same as faith is passed through generations. The God of yesterday is still the God of today.