

Lancaster First Church of God celebrates 200 Years!

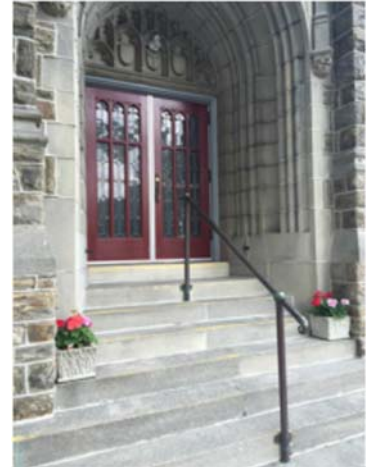
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Do you remember what was happening in 1816?

Indiana became the 19th state in the union. French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte had just been exiled to the island of Saint Helena after relinquishing his throne for a second and final time. You wouldn't have been able to send a Morse Code message yet (wasn't invented until 1836). It's hard for me to wrap my mind around how different things were at that time.

In 1816, an independent church was organized by Rev. John Elliot in Lancaster, PA. The church met at the Old Friends Meeting House from 1816-1822. The church would establish its first building in 1822 and become known as Union Bethel. In 1828 John Winebrenner preached at Union Bethel and the congregation began to identify with Winebrenner and his teachings. Eliot would go on to serve as the first clerk of the Church of God eldership when in was organized in 1830. It was in 1841 when the congregation began using the name Church of God. This congregation is now known as the Lancaster First Church of God.



Pastor Doug Nolt

Last Sunday, May 15, 2016, I was honored to be a part of the celebration of 200 years of ministry at the Lancaster First Church of God in Lancaster, PA. The congregation pulled out all the stops for this special milestone: lots of sons and daughters of the congregation returned to share in the day of celebration, a special musical celebration by the choir, the sermon by one of the "sons" of the congregation, Pastor Doug Nolt, senior pastor of the Indian Head Church of God (Allegheny Region), and a noon meal in the fellowship hall.



I appreciated Pastor Doug Nolt's message from Hebrews chapter 12 and the focus on the future instead of their past. It's a congregation with a lot of history and a rich legacy of sending! Mary Hershey, missionary to India from 1937-1964 and Haiti 1969-1979 came from this congregation and then returned to serve there upon her retirement from the mission field. Lois Habecker, missionary to India/Bangladesh from 1957-1971 and Haiti from 1971-1996 also was a daughter of Lancaster First. Affiliate CGGC Missionaries Jim and Kay Baker with Navajo Missions Inc. both grew up in this congregation and have served in New Mexico since 1975 to present. The legacy of sending is continuing as Tommy and Joanna (Dull) Kopp prepare for service in missions aviation – Tommy is a product of Lancaster First and Joanna is the daughter of Pastor Ron and Miriam Dull.



Their work isn't done! Our work isn't done either. What are you giving yourself to today that will continue to bear fruit 200 years from now? I'm so grateful that Pastor Elliot and the brothers and sisters with him were willing to give themselves to something that would still be producing fruit, changing lives, and reaching around the globe 200 years later!



Here are some thoughts I shared with both the present and future members of the congregation through a letter to commemorate this milestone:



Pastor Don Price leads worship

Commit yourselves to the cause of Christ, so that the next 200 years might produce even greater fruit than your first 200 years as a congregation. Give yourselves fully to the work of seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness so that you might continue to bear fruit that lasts for all eternity. Keep on exercising much faith and taking bold risks for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the advancement of His kingdom! Stay faithful to the call of preaching Jesus and the coming of His kingdom!



A time of sharing

Brothers and sisters, imagine the gathering 200 years from now as the Lancaster First Church of God celebrates 400 years of faithful service to our King Jesus! Imagine the stories of lives that have been radically and eternally changed because of the way in which you exercised your faith and bore witness to Christ. Imagine the stories of how God used this congregation to forever change this neighborhood, this city, this region and even the far reaches of the world. Imagine the brothers and sisters who will travel from places around the globe to give testimony to your willingness to take the Gospel to the far reaches of the world by sending your sons and daughters as Ambassadors of King Jesus!



Richard Longsderff shares a story

Don't grow weary in doing good my dear brothers and sisters. Don't rest upon the accomplishments of your past and lose sight of the great work God has called you to do. Commit today to respond in obedience to the One who has saved you, redeemed you, and given you a new identity as His sons and daughters so that you might enjoy Him and serve Him with your very lives. Continue the good work that He's called you to do so that He alone might receive glory and so that His name and fame would be increased throughout our world!

I doubt the brothers and sisters who gathered in 1816 could imagine the end results of their faithfulness in their day. I'm going to guess that they were much like us in navigating the realities of their day-to-day lives without much thought to what might result two centuries forward. Because of their faithfulness to Christ, thousands and thousands of lives have been touched in Lancaster, New Mexico, India, Bangladesh, Haiti, and beyond!

Let's live with such purpose and intentionality as disciples of Jesus that our lives would continue to bear fruit well beyond our own lives!

Christ's Peace,

Lance

Mount Tabor Church in Great Lakes seeking Pastor

The Mount Tabor Church of God is prayerfully seeking a full-time Pastor who is a strong Biblical preacher that takes evangelism seriously. The ideal candidate is able to develop lay leaders and is comfortable incorporating technology into ministry.

The church has a well established children's ministry and a strong youth program with paid leadership. Mt Tabor is a growing rural church 6 miles north of Celina on State Route 127 that serves a multi-generational congregation. It currently is providing two worship services on Sundays. The church has an excellent modern building with the latest addition being a gym/multi-purpose facility built in 2009. Average attendance for the past year has been 200.

Our goal as we move forward is to have a significant impact in our community through outreach that will result in church growth. Our mission statement is *"To Glorify God by sharing His love in our community, through reaching out and building up."*

If you are interested in this great ministry opportunity or have questions, please send a resume or express your interest by **July 15** by sending a resume to head elder **Pete Hayes**, petehayes@abm1st.com 419-305-0055.

