



Philemon, each time I mention you in my prayers, I thank God 5 I hear about your faith in our Lord Jesus and about your love for all of God's people. 6 As you share your faith with others, I pray that they may come to know all the blessings Christ has given us. Philemon: 4-6 (CEV)

We live in an interesting time. That's something to be able to remember and tell to our grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Marilyn and I just are getting back from a little vacation. I told the confirmation class last night that the day before (Tuesday the 24th) I had been on the West Coast in Spokane, Washington, traveled to Minneapolis, Minnesota and then to Des Moines and then home to Waterloo. All of that was in the span of about 18 hours.

I also thought of the persons who in 1848 (only 175 years ago) and the years following crossed the Missouri River at St. Joseph, Missouri and left with wagon pulled by oxen on the Oregon Trail and hoped that the animals and the equipment didn't break down and that the people would survive the 10-mile-a-day trip that took months to places like Portland and Spokane. They knew that the persons (parents and siblings) that they were leaving behind, they would probably never see again (for better or worse) in this lifetime. On our most recent trip we were not only able to stay in touch with cell-phones but have reported that you were having another snow-storm with ice here but also for you to find out that we were having sunny skies and 75 degree temperatures in Portland, Ore. (Hold the tomatoes, we brought the good weather back with us...we take credit for the good news, blame the weatherman for the bad). What is more than interesting...like other modern amazing things, that whole scenario of our communication borders on the miraculous!

For me, at least, who has gone from that period of time and from a one-room country school and helping to farm with horses? We lived like the Amish today.

I also went to the funeral of an exceptional woman the day we left. (The thought just occurred to me that I've been writing more about funerals lately....) She was 80 years young, a

musician and a church organist with whom I had worked in another parish for 8 years, very capable, cooperative and energetic. I thought about the fact that the Norwegian ancestors who formed the parish of which she was a part brought with them a deep sense of the need to live by the faith they had learned and practiced in their native land and also to make certain that the faith would be learned and practiced by their children and other descendants in the new country to which they were coming. That needs to be respected!

Our German ancestors here at St. John's who formed this congregation in 1881, not long after the Oregon Trail was opened were of the same cut of cloth as the Norwegians. And we who live in this interesting, amazing, miraculous age that is so different in so many ways from theirs, may know and have the same interests and responsibilities.

I saw a message shirt the other day that announced: "Nothing works unless you do!" That's a great reminder of what makes for success in lots of things. Our descendants understood that in terms of spiritual opportunities and responsibilities. Thanks to all of you who share in that as well.

God bless us all, Pastor T.