

WELCOME HOME
The News from Indian Lake
June 8, 2025 – Pentecost Sunday
Acts 2: 1-21
Dean Feldmeyer

Well, it's been an uneventful event filled spring at Indian Lake this year.

The almost constant rain has kept the tourist population lower than it usually is in May which is both a blessing and a curse. Fewer boating mishaps on the water but also fewer dollars spent.

Fishermen – male and female – are heedless of the weather, however, and have managed to keep things moving along if not exactly rolling along businesswise. Art Jensen, the manager of the new Holiday Inn Express says that business has been slower than hoped for, but they are “meeting expenses” which is what he always says no matter how business is going.

Molly Kinzinger, who owns The Warf gifts, crafts, and souvenir shop is a little concerned about whether she's going to be able to sell all the t-shirts she's got sitting in boxes in her garage. She bought about a zillion shirts that are made in China hoping to beat the tariffs but now the tariffs have been canceled or postponed or something, she isn't sure. Thankfully the shirts are all blank as she does the silk screening herself in her converted dining room. John, her husband and business partner, says not to worry, she didn't print any dates on the shirts, so they'll still be good next year. Anyway, it's still early, the weather could clear up. Who knows.

The Memorial Day celebration went off pretty much without a hitch. The weeds that plagued the lake last spring and part of the summer are gone and the boat parade was a triumph. The organizers made it clear that no cannons or firearms would be fired during the playing of the National Anthem and everyone in the parade reluctantly complied.

Then there was that fire over on Long Island last weekend that burned down two houses and seriously damaged two others. Fire departments say that the damage was so extensive due to high winds and Long Island being so far from the towns that they had to wind around through three other islands to get to the fire. Anyway, no one was hurt being as how the houses were all summer homes and the owners had not yet arrived for the weekend.

The only other real excitement has come from over in Huntsville at the Huntsville United Methodist Church.

A REFUGEE FAMILY

As you may recall from our last visit to the lake, the Huntsville UMC has had 16 pastors in the past 35 years, not through any fault on anyone's part. It's just the way it works out.

See, the HUMC is a small country church of about 90 members with 25-30 in attendance on most Sunday mornings and a church that size can't afford to pay a pastor who is in his or her prime and well-seasoned with a seminary degree and 15 years of experience. They have a modest endowment which along with their weekly offerings and a few fund raisers throughout

the year, makes it possible for them to pay the conference minimum salary and provide the pastor's family with health insurance – which now costs more than the salary – and a small, 3-bedroom, one bath, parsonage that doesn't come even close to meeting the conference parsonage standards. The only reason they have the parsonage at all is that it was left to them by Willum and Teresa Brenhoover when Teresa passed about 30 years ago. (In fact, people still refer to it as the Brenhoover Parsonage.)

So, things being what they are at the Huntsville UMC, they can only afford a pastor who is just freshly graduated from the seminary, a probationary Elder still moving toward full ordination. Back in the day, these ministers – women and men – were always young and often just beginning their families and were, presumably, able to live for a couple of years on a meager salary in a small, substandard parsonage. Then they would then move on to a bigger church, making room for the next newly minted seminary grad to take their place. Only, in the past few years, there haven't been all that many newly minted seminary graduates waiting in line to step into the pulpit at Huntsville and the ones who do come out are mostly second career folks with families in full bloom.

As it turns out, there are about 60 churches in the conference that don't have pastors, and they tend to gobble up the seminary grads as soon as they exit the campus.

So, the current pastor, Rev. Daryl Schneider (pastors at Huntsville UMC are almost always referred to as, "the current pastor,") is, this July, entering his fourth year at Huntsville and has decided that it's time to stop being a pastor-in-training as pastors fresh out of seminary and serving small churches are usually considered to be, and start doing some actual, visionary ministry leadership.

And it is Pastor Daryl's idea of actual, visionary ministry leadership that is causing what Myra Jean Krumm, the chairwoman of the church council refers to as "a little kerfuffle" among the members of the church.

To understand the kerfuffle, however we need some background.

Bhutan is a small country of about 700,000 souls in east Asia, on the eastern slopes of the Himalayan Mountains, bordered by China, India, Pakistan, and Nepal.

A few years ago, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck decided to unite the country by instituting a policy known as "One Nation, One People" that required all people living in the country to become Buddhists and to speak the Bhutan language. Only one problem with that -- the people living in the southern region of the country, about 140,000 souls known as Lhotshampas ("southerners"), were ethnic Nepalese Hindus who spoke the Nepalese language. They were given an ultimatum: Renounce your ethnic heritage and become Buddhists, start speaking Bhutanese or get out.

Namgay and Sangay Doya were Lhotshampas school teachers and they, with their toddler son Karma and infant daughter Nima managed to live under the radar for a couple of years but they were eventually outed by one of their neighbors and expelled from the country along with about 120,000 other southerners and went to live in Nepal in a refugee camp. They

applied to come to the United States as refugees and, after waiting and being vetted for more than ten years, they were given permission to enter the country, slipping in just before President Trump put a stop to all immigration.

Their original sponsor was the Friendship United Methodist Church in the Cincinnati suburb of Wyoming but the folks at Friendship were already sponsoring three other families from three other countries and their resources were running pretty thin. So, pastor Vicki at Friendship called her old seminary classmate, Daryl Schneider to see if his church might be interested in sponsoring a refugee family.

This request might have fallen on deaf ears with any other pastor but Daryl Schneider was an exception for two reasons. One, Daryl was a second career pastor having been a history teacher for 10 years before entering the ministry and that made him older than a lot of other newly minted pastors. And two, his advanced age also gave him a faint memory of another refugee family sponsored by another United Methodist Church, his family's church, the Mt. Olive UMC in Indianapolis, Indiana.

He didn't remember their names, except for the little boy whose name was Alexander. They came from Cuba and their flight to America had been fraught with peril. He didn't know what kind of peril but he remembered his parents and grandparents hailing this family as heroes of freedom and champions of democracy. Alexander's father was a doctor, they said, but he couldn't be a doctor in the United States so he was the custodian at the church. The family didn't speak English when they arrived so someone in the church enrolled them in a night class at the high school. There were lots of those kinds of classes because, apparently, there were lots of people coming from Cuba to the United States in those days.

Daryl remembered playing with Alex even though Alex was a couple of years older than him and didn't speak English but it didn't matter, they still had fun together. And he remembered his mother helping Alexander's mother go grocery shopping, clothing shopping, and to the laundromat.

But mostly, he remembered the whole church rallying around that family, helping them, assisting them, driving them around, taking them to places they had to go, for more than a year until the family was on their feet. Not long after that, Daryl's dad got a promotion at work and his family moved to Columbus, Ohio but he always wondered what ever became of Alexander and his family.

Which brings us to a few weeks ago when pastor Daryl invited pastor Vicki to be there to answer questions when he brought the idea of sponsoring a refugee family to the Huntsville UMC church council.

The Doya family, he told them, would shortly be arriving in the United States from Bhutan by way of Nepal. He described their history of being expelled from their country for ethnic and religious reasons. He described the refugee camp where they had lived for the past ten years and the school that Namgay and Sangay had started there. He told them about how the entire family had studied and worked hard to learn some English and were still working at it, how the parents were both college-educated teachers, and how their teenage son, Karma's favorite

thing in the world was soccer and their 11-year-old daughter wanted to be a nurse when she grew up.

Pastor Vicki explained that the sponsoring church would be hosts to the family, responsible for finding housing and helping the family get settled into the community. They would help the adults find employment and get the kids enrolled in school, show them around the community, get a driver's license and a car, and, generally speaking, become Americans.

The church council all agreed that the thing to do would be to announce to the church that this was under consideration and hold a Q and A meeting after worship on a Sunday in the near future. They also agreed that such a decision would have to be agreed upon by most of the congregation and not just the council.

So, a date was set and the meeting announced. Sandwiches, cookies, and iced tea would be served.

UNITED METHODIST CONTROVERSY

Brent Hickson was against it but that surprised no one as Brent was a curmudgeon who felt it was his duty to be against everything. He called it "playing the devil's advocate" but most people just called it "being disagreeable." Not willing to wait for the meeting Brent had berated and bemoaned the idea to everyone he knew including people who weren't even members of the church.

"The whole town's in an uproar over this," he said over his ham and cheese sandwich and iced tea at the church meeting. An obvious exaggeration as most of the town didn't know anything about it and the ones he had talked to, knowing Brent, had pretty much shrugged it off.

"They'll be taking good jobs that should be going to Americans," he said. Tom Bradford pointed out that half the businesses in town had "help wanted" signs hanging in their windows that had been there for the past year.

"They won't be able to speak proper English," Brent complained. Meg Atwater, who teaches Senior English at the Indian Lake High School pointed out that the families that own La Playa Azul and El Cazador Mexican restaurants aren't exactly speaking Shakespeare. She also offered that if speaking proper English was a requirement for residence in the United States, half of her students and most of the people who she talks to at the L&K Diner would have to leave.

"They won't fit in," Brent insisted. This one was met with little more than a groan and a yawn. Only Ginny Johnson, retired librarian and Indian Lake's resident liberal crusader bothered to respond. "What, you mean because they aren't white?" Brent denied that that was what he meant but he was less than convincing. He had, after all, been against the town giving a tax incentive to the Jewish delicatessen owner, and the Chamber of Commerce bringing in the Chinese-American pediatrician, and the Indian-American orthodontist.

"We can't afford it!" thundered Brent. And there it was. Money. Thin and transparent as all his other arguments were, this one actually had some heft. If they were going to do this, where would they get the money to rent a house and help the family set up housekeeping and buy winter clothes and a reliable car, etc., etc.?

The discussion was tabled until someone came up with an idea for how they would get the money to take on such a project as sponsoring a refugee family and doing it responsibly. For three weeks, nothing happened. It was like the subject had fallen off the face of the earth. Died for lack of a second as they say in parliamentary procedure.

Then Daryl had an idea.

HERITAGE SUNDAY

Sunday, May 4 would be Heritage Sunday. They would celebrate the history of their church, their community, and, most importantly, their families.

He recruited some help and they built a big bulletin board for the front of the church and invited members and friends of the church to bring pictures of their ancestors, especially their immigrant ancestors who first brought their families to this country, and pin them to the bulletin board at the front before the service began.

And, much to his surprise and delight, they did. These folks were proud of their history and their heritage. The bulletin board was full of pictures – sepia toned, black and white, even a few tintypes. Old men with long beards and stern looking women in bonnets. Men holding stringers of fresh caught fish and women sitting around quilts with needles and thread in their fingers. Men in bib overalls and women in Sunday-go-to-meeting dresses. People standing around outside a church and in a field of knee-high corn.

The choir sang "Faith of our Fathers" and Daryl preached on Leviticus 19:34 – "The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God." And Matthew 25:35 – "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in."

Daryl was never one to trust subtlety. Pastor Vicki, when he told her about the service, said, "Boy, you laid it on pretty thick, didn't you?" He replied, grinning, "With a trowel."

But it worked.

The developers who were threatening to buy and develop what had been the Geiger Trailer Park until the tornado last year, had been scared off by the threat of tariffs and the constant demonstrations and threatened lawsuits by the neighbors. Greg Pendleton, who had retired from farming and sold the farm bought what was left of the trailer park and begun restoring it as Geiger Village, installing several rental mobile homes of his own. He offered one of them for the Doya family on a graduated rent scale starting at zero and growing to market rate in two years with an option to purchase.

Diane Henley whose dad owns Henley Motors in Bellefontaine told her dad about what they were trying to do and he agreed to find a nice used car in his inventory, have his mechanics go over it with a fine-tooth comb and sell it to the church at cost. After working the kind of manipulation that only daughters can do with their fathers, he gave the church a 2018 Ford Fusion in mint condition.

Pastor Vicki met the Doyas at the Dayton airport and drove them to Indian Lake on Memorial Day weekend. They arrived at the church to much hoopla and hugs and a huge pot luck dinner after which they were introduced to their new home, a 3-bedroom doublewide mobile home, which was so nice that they all, including some church members cried.

Pastor Daryl gave them the key and promised to meet them the next day after they had time to rest. They are, as we speak, settling comfortably into their new home and community and their new church. No, they haven't suddenly converted to Christianity but they still come to church each Sunday as a sign of respect for the church that has adopted them as their own. Pastor Daryl says they are hybrids – Hindu Methodists – to which everyone laughs.

To his wife and kids and pastor Vicki he confesses, taking a breath to clear a little hitch in his throat and trying unsuccessfully to hold back a tear, that this is why he became a pastor, so he could be present on those occasions when the church steps up and becomes the church that God meant it to be when he first anointed it with his Holy Spirit on that first Pentecost day.

AMEN