

Pastor's Ponderings April 2025

*Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple,
they broke bread in their homes and ate their food with glad and generous hearts,
praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.*

- Acts 2:46-47

Faith United Church of Christ held its founding worship service on March 13, 1960. In celebration of the church's 65th anniversary I want to share some history:

When I was studying for my Master of Divinity degree at Princeton Theological Seminary in the 1980s, I learned about Harry Emerson Fosdick. You may not know the name, but he was considered the most famous Christian minister of the 20th century until the rise of Billy Graham. Fosdick was the author of nearly 50 books and more than 1,000 sermons. He was the founding pastor of Riverside Church in Manhattan in 1930 which immediately became and still is one of the most prominent and important progressive Christian churches in the country. He was featured on the cover of Time Magazine in the 1934 and is credited with showing the continuing relevance of Christianity in the modern era. He also, as it happens, was born in Buffalo, NY, and is considered the most famous graduate of Colgate College in Rochester. And, in 1937, near the height of his career, while he was pastor at Riverside Church, Harry Emerson Fosdick took a train one weekend from NY City out to Buffalo and then made his way down here to the little town of Boston, NY where he was the featured speaker at St. Paul's United Evangelical Church then celebrating its 100th anniversary. The United Evangelical Church was a union of German and American Reformed traditions. St. Paul's United Evangelical Church soon changed its name to St. Paul's Evangelical and Reformed Church, and a generation later, St. Paul's joined with the Boston Community Church in 1960 to form this congregation, Faith United Church of Christ. It's a remarkable little piece of the long-ago history of what became our present church. It turns out the Rev. Fosdick's great-grandfather, Solomon Fosdick was a carpenter here in Boston for many years and he and his sons were the ones who built St. Paul's Church. The Fosdick family lived at that time in a log cabin near the corner of what is now Boston State Road and Boston Colden Road.

While the congregation from St. Paul's came to this new united congregation with over 120 years of German Reformed tradition, the Boston Community Church had an equally long but more varied history. It seems to have started out in the 1830s as the First Universalist Church of the Town of Boston. The Universalist churches were a progressive offshoot of the New England Congregationalists, which was apparently not terribly popular in 19th century Boston. By the mid-1880s the congregation seems to have dwindled to a small group of women called the Universalist Sewing Circle. A new congregation was formed in the 1930s as the Boston Community Church (the Community Churches also had a Congregationalist heritage but were more traditional Christians than the Universalists). They were the smaller of the two churches when they joined with the St. Paul's congregation, initially forming a "Cooperative Parish" in 1958 before officially merging as Faith United Church of Christ in 1960.

Establishing a new church from the ground up is not for the lighthearted or the weak of faith. Those founding members created this congregation and built this church by the sweat of their brow and the sacrifice of their purses, and many long hours of hard work. There are stories of board meetings running toward midnight and of women cooking meals and men working on the church building multiple nights a week for months, and years. The building of the parsonage was completed in 1962 and the original sanctuary and classrooms in 1966 (The elevator entrance was added in 1983, and additional classrooms & office space in 2001). Like those first Christians described in the Book of Acts, the first members of Faith Church "spent much time together," shared meals together, and worked diligently and faithfully with "glad and generous hearts." Many

others have stepped up along the way to do what needed to be done, and many continue to give of their time and talents and resources to keep our church going strong.

I give thanks for all who have made Faith Church what it is and pray that the traditions of diligent work and faithful dedication will continue in this church long into the future.

May it be so.

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