

Subject: Not finished – but Begun

Remarks by Rev. Ev Stoddard at the anniversary program.

What a privilege it is for me to be a part of this celebration – 175 years of being a mission outpost in the East Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church. I was also privileged to be a part of the West Hartland UMC 180th anniversary. I appreciate accepting the congratulations of the Conference and the Historical Society on behalf of you, the saints of Collins. It's great to be with you and again thank you for coming to be a part of this celebration.

My topic as you see is “Not Finished, but Begun.” Are we finished here as a ministry? (A resounding “NO” was voiced. But even as we're not finished sometimes there are bends in the road that we don't anticipate and that gives us opportunity to fully rely on God for wisdom and guidance.

In Scripture, we read of lots of beginnings which don't go as you or I might plan.....Moses lead the people and he gets nothing but grumbling for his efforts....He doesn't even get to go into the promised land....He gets to see it. But he doesn't get to lead the people in. “Not finished but begun.”

Abraham and Sarah....promised to be the parents of the great nation.....but no children for what seems like forever....”Not finished but begun.”

Jacob desires to be wed to Rachel...Laban tricks him into marrying Leah after seven years of working to earn Rachel's hand in marriage. Then he works for another seven years to get Rachel again....well he does get Rachel but the promised family doesn't happen for years and years....but then finally Joseph.

“Not finished.....but begun.”

A mother and father have 19 children....nine of them die in infancy....two get the opportunity to further their education...they become priests in the Church of England....they go to America to spread the good news, and they fail miserably...with their tails tucked between their legs they return to England and have soul changing experiences....both become awesome preachers and change the world with their message of God's grace. John and Charles Wesley.

“Not finished...but begun.”

A man by the name of John loses his mother as a young man....his life goes south...he's forced to go into the British Navy...it's the Navy or life in prison most likely..... he deserts from the Navy...he's captured...he's flogged...he's back on the boats and is jolted awake by a storm...he says of the experience...”the Lord came to me and delivered me out of deep waters...”.his life changes...he lives to pen the words to one of the most famous inspirational songs of all time....”we've no less days to sing God's praise, then when we've first begun...” ..and another verse of “Amazing Grace” we really never sing...”the earth shall soon dissolve like snow, the sun forbid to shine; But God, Who called me here below, shall be forever mine.”

Collins Church....we've only just begun....as long as we keep our focus on God's Amazing Grace....the famous song John Newton lived to write...as long as we keep God's amazing grace – God's offer of Salvation before us for the future....we have only just begun.....and even if the earth dissolves like snow...if the sun forbids to shine....God has called us here for this time

Praise God? Praise God!