

A Year In Reflection

[2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10, Mark 6:1-13](#)

Well, I don't know about you, but I think this has been an interesting year. First, it is still hard for me to believe it has already been a year since my family and I joined the Mount Tabor family. It is true that we have had some difficult times this year. Some of us have lost loved ones who were so near and dear to our hearts. We have seen others, including some here today, with health issues and problems due to the current economic situation. Personally, my family has gone through a cycle of problems with our vehicles – although we do thank God that we are all still here and not harmed from our various misfortunes. I have had the ultimate culture shock of returning to school after an 8-year hiatus, trying to get an idea of just what each instructor expects. But through it all we keep moving forward. Our congregation also continues to move forward.

Second, it seems we have accomplished a great deal this year. Our launching point seemed to be after we solidified our vision and mission statements. I know with any major transport vehicle, the first task is to set the rudder or guide so you know where you are heading. We seemed more than ready to program our GPS based on what God was calling us to do. Our community needs the church now more than ever. I don't think anyone wants to stop the momentum that continues to move and guide us in our mission of finding ways to connect with our community while sharing the love of Christ with our neighbors.

Some of what we are doing may seem like we have crossed a line into the secular realm. When folks talk about marketing or placing ads in the local paper, they don't always think of a church function. Yet these tools are effective for churches that are seeking a connection with others. We need to let our

community know that we are alive and kicking without making assumptions. In the past, any church could put a sign up that said “Service at 10 AM” and everyone would know we were talking about services on Sunday morning. With the influx of a diverse population, those assumptions can no longer be made. So we tell them, right on our sign out front that services are on Sunday mornings. People are starting to recognize Mount Tabor for its outreach. The events we have held for our children have brought in three times more children than we normally have here on Sundays. Most recently, we broke records for both our chicken dinners. The word is getting out – Mount Tabor is an important presence in our community.

So how do we get those who come for our fun events to join us on Sunday mornings? How do we help those who seem to have no interest in the primary reason for our existence as a

body of Christ? In the advertising world, on average people have to see or hear an ad multiple times before they will act on it. Often it is between 7-10 times before the ad will even register with a potential customer. However, there is one form of advertising that is considered the most powerful and it costs nothing. Would anyone care to take a guess on this type of advertising? Word of mouth – it is when someone tries a product or service, likes it, and shares his/her experience with others. Marketers love this one because there is virtually no cost to the company – free advertising.

I heard a story once of a couple of men who had been friends for years. The one would always go golfing on Sunday mornings during the fair weather months and would invite his friend with him. His friend would always turn him down because the friend attended church on Sunday mornings.

Regardless, the golfer would regularly invite his friend to join him. Finally, the golfer said, “You know, I invite you to join me for golfing on Sundays. Why is it that you never invite me to go to church with you on Sundays?” I have heard missionaries say that in some countries it is easier to be a missionary than it is to witness to someone in the United States.

Why is that? Why do we have such a hard time sharing God’s love with people in our own neighborhood than others do in foreign countries? Perhaps it is related to our scripture lesson from Mark where Jesus was witnessing in his own home town, only to be shunned and treated with hostility. The son of God was virtually driven out of his own hometown. People simply refused to believe that Jesus was any more than the son of Mary and Joseph. But Jesus’ lack of reception in his own hometown did not deter his efforts to continue sharing the good news that

God had sent his son to dwell on earth, to teach and preach the good news that the Messiah had finally come.

When we look at sharing the message of Mount Tabor as a house of God, we can possibly see the similarities between evangelism – sharing the good news of Christ’s life, death, resurrection, and ultimate return; when comparing this to our modern understanding of advertising. There is one huge difference between advertising in the secular world and alerting our neighbors to our church activities and God’s work in our lives. Christ’s love for us is offered without price – we aren’t trying to make a name for ourselves or land a million dollar contract. We are sharing the incredible gift of God’s love with our neighbors because our joy is contagious! This gift is a wonderful comfort when the storms of life rage on.

I think we will continue to see fruits of our evangelism efforts through our outreach programs. That sounds good but what exactly are our outreach programs? Here are a few we supported this year:

- Labor Day church picnic
- Halloween Party
- Work with the Children's center in Hagerstown
- Advent Services
- Christmas Eve/Children's program complete with the Grinch
- The Gospel Travelers
- Lyon's club and Farmer's club dinners
- Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
- Lenten services
- Adult Bible Study
- Holy Week including 2 services on Easter Sunday
- Youth Sunday
- Mother's Day and Father's Day dinners
- Luau Party for kids of all ages

And we are not nearly finished yet. We are having a difficult time getting things settled to work on the hall floor because we are so busy with activities. Look for some information in the

near future concerning an enhanced worship planning team as we look to do more creative things during our worship services. We may be looking at some different fellowship opportunities, particularly a men's fellowship, a women's fellowship, and continued programs for children and youth. We have a lot to offer our community. When all is said and done, if people can feel God's presence in a very real sense, then we have fulfilled our mission to help people of our community find a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Worship is not just for the pastor. Worship is not just for church members. Worship is for God. We come together in the spirit of Christian love to give praise to Almighty God. If we ever get the idea that worship is just for us, we will have indeed lost our focus. God is still working in our community. Let us continue to extend the hand of hospitality to our neighbors while inviting them to share in our worship of God together. We are

one in the Spirit – we are one in the Lord. Let us continue to give all praise and glory to God who gives us the strength and encouragement to share God's love with others. Amen.