

## **Sharing Our Stories**

Oak Grove Presbyterian Church

Rev. Mary Koon

Golden Harvest Sunday, October 11, 2020

**Candle Lighting:** Psalm 46:10 – “Be Still and Know that I am God.”

**Children’s Story:** 76 years ago Jackie Hall moved to Bloomington and met her two best friends – the three were confirmed together at Oak Grove. She and her friends were in the Junior Fellowship and friends, the St. Martin boys (and their girlfriends, later their wives) were in the high school fellowship. Jackie and her two best friends were super giggly and silly. When the groups would get together, the bigger boys would help these girls out by offering to say the prayer when it was the girls’ turn. This happened over and over! On a very cold, wintery night, they were all on hay-ride and Jackie said that her friends Steve, Willy and Dick St. Martin pushed her off that hay ride, like 43 times! She wasn’t hurt, but Jackie thinks they were getting her back for always having to cover for them and say the prayer.

Gene Morris says that back in the day there were not many churches in Bloomington – he was at OG because it was where his school buddies went. One special Sunday, December 7, 1941, after church, Gene went home and listened to the radio and heard that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. He didn’t know where Pearl Harbor was, but soon learned and later visited Hawaii twice.

Now, back in Gene and Jackie’s day, the church building looked different – it was gray stucco and the doors were in different places. There was a giant bell inside the church that was rung by pulling a rope – bong! Bong! Bong! You could hear it throughout the neighborhood. (Today that bell is outside and we sometimes ring it for special services)

Anyway, back then, the church was also never, ever locked! You could come inside any time of the day or night. So, on Halloween night, Gene and his friends would run into the church, ring the bell a few times and then run! They laughed and laughed! If you were around back then, and remember hearing the church bell on Halloween night, you now know who rang it!

**How We Got Here:** I received lots of memories about how folks “found” Oak Grove and why they chose to call this place home. As you heard, Jackie and Gene were children here and grew up here and raised their children in this place. Many people talked about how Oak Grove is foundational in their lives.

Bob and Dorothy Sorensen married in Iowa in 1959, and then moved to Bloomington. They visited several churches in the area, but chose Oak Grove because of the friendly people, community outreach and Pastor Ed Knudsen, who everyone called Uncle Ed!

Iris Karow remembers walking through the doors and being welcomed by Betty Johnson – she was the Sandy Crum/ Ron Dubis of the 1970’s – and Betty made her feel as though she had been waiting for Iris! Iris grew up in the Presbyterian Church, but had attended an Episcopal Church for several years, and as soon as she opened the hymnal, she knew she was home.

Three families are here because of their children. The Goodwins were attending another church when their children joined Oak Grove at Clearwater Camp one summer. Their children made friendships with the Oak Grove kids and loved Dave Kachel (the minister here at the time), and as Jeanne and Gordon put it... the writing was on the wall!

Don Wagner’s kids were hockey players and played for Bloomington. The family attended church in Edina until his kids let Don and Jeanne

know that the Edina players were not treating them well because they were sports rivals. The Wagner family moved to Oak Grove and never looked back.

The Twete's daughter, Lizanne, moved to Bloomington 15 years ago and Dick and Marilyn looked for a church to attend while they were here visiting her. They went to several, but Oak grove was the one that kept "calling" them back because of the meaning, relevant services, great music, and friendliness of the people. When life led them to move to the area 1.5 years ago it was as though it was "meant to be." There was never any question that Oak Grove was home.

Thanks be to God for each member, friend and associate of this place!

### **Serving God in This Place:**

As Nancy Hoaglund says, "Oak Grove is a very unique place."

From serving coffee and pastries before church, like Bob Worthington did, or helping at the Harvest Festival like Marilyn Eidem, to serving as a Deacon or Elder, teaching Sunday School, remodeling the church building to being on the Tech team, Board of Trustees, to working with our Monday Morning guys – our Golden Harvest folks were and are active in ministry.

A couple of things I'd like to highlight!

The music ministry has been a vital part of the lives of many, many people. Iris shared that being part of the cast of "Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat" allowed for the beauty of broadening her circle of friends in faith, as they learned and served together. The music program here is one of the most important parts of Enid Lang's life, and she has been singing in the choir and playing her flute in special services here for 58 years.

Our Golden Harvest honorees also talked about the significance of travel with Oak Grove – Israel/Palestine, South Africa, Pakistan and Europe, to name a few.

Jan Alquist says that the opportunity to go Guatemala twice, to participate in building a clinic in San Lucas Toliman during one trip and then seeing it in action – serving people in the community - during the second trip was one of her most treasured moments.

Pat Boehne told us this, “One time we were returning from an orphanage in Czechoslovakia where Dave and Nancy Kachel had worked as volunteers. The Iron Curtain was still in force and we were returning to West Germany. When we went through the border area we were ordered off the bus, our passports were collected and valuables were kept on the bus. Mirrors were shoved under the bus and we were all more than a little nervous. Then we noticed Arnie Johnson had gathered a group together in an open space while we waited. He was leading them in calisthenics and later Betty, his wife, led us in the hokey-pokey. This caused quite a commotion, people were getting out of cars to watch, guards were showing up (with their rifles) and, I guess, the commandant decided it was a good plan to shoo those "crazy Americans" out of there as quickly as possible! How good it felt to get over the border and how close we felt to our Oak Grove community!

The Nettens shared that The Wales Choir Tour ranks as one of the greatest things they've done in their lifetimes. The entire experience, from hours and hours of learning the music, to fundraising, deepening friendships with choir members and tour guides – the camaraderie and humor were marvelous, as was singing in special places like castles and underground mines.

And just a few years ago, Bob and Dorothy Sorensen went on our intergenerational mission trip to St. Louis and served in urban ministries

with folks from their early teens to their 80's! The couple will never forget our 15-hour drive through a blizzard from Minnesota through Iowa.

And now I'll let you all in on a little secret that finally can see the light of day, thanks to Glenn Pettit, one of our centenarians and former member of our Monday morning crew. He says this, "Ten or fifteen years ago, when we were battling a few leaks in the educational wing, the crew needed to stop a leak over the senior high room because a storm was coming. We couldn't find that roof leak that morning, but we could put a bucket out in the attic to collect the dripping indicated by the stained tiles." Glenn and buddy Phil drove around Bloomington looking at hardware stores for pails or buckets or anything that would work. They stopped at a thrift store and found an inflatable wading pool with an air pump to blow it up. Glenn writes, "After getting this contraption up in the attic through a one-man size opening and over all the pipes and miscellaneous impediment Phil, Gene, and I located the wading pool, inflated it under the drip point and hoped for rain. It collected rain for many years." Nobody but Building and Ops knew about the wading pool under the roof – until now!

Thanks be to God for the ministry and mission in this place!

### **Significant Moments**

As a faith community, one of the most essential things we do is accompany one another through the defining moments of our lives – times of decision like marriage, confirmation and baptism. Days of gladness, child- birth, adoption, birthdays, anniversaries, retirement celebrations and graduations. Times of heartbreak and sorrow as we walk together and support one another in grief and pray for one another during an illness.

Numerous folks talked about the joys of being married here, having their children and then grandchildren baptized, confirmed and married here. A lifetime of stories and memories – each one unique. I'll share a couple:

When Darlene and Larry's Thronson's daughter Jill was baptized here nearly 58 years ago, she was just a few months old. Babies are notoriously unpredictable, and little Jill cried through the entire baptism. Now, that's stressful and embarrassing for new parents! Larry was so nervous that he developed hives!

Bob Worthington says that he was the recipient of the gift and blessing of prayers from the congregation during the period of his long recovery from cancer, for which he is eternally grateful.

Multiple people shared how special it was to have their spouse's memorial service at Oak Grove. Such tender memories.

Lou Traeder has a story to share. She writes, "In February of 1994, our oldest child, Laurie, died suddenly and unexpectedly due to a pulmonary embolism. She was 34 years old, married, working and living in Utah. Blake and I were retired and we enjoyed traveling, which we were doing when we received the call about Laurie's death – it was such a shock and the tremendous grief was almost overwhelming."

Lou and her husband arrived in Utah and had a memorial service for Laurie there, and then returned and had another at Oak Grove. The church was helpful during this time.

Lou says, "A very special act of kindness occurred while we were at Gideon Pond playing Bridge with the Oak Grove Bridge group. Charles Wheeler asked Blake if he'd like to go fishing after the opener – Blake said 'okay' and they tried to set up a time and place to go. Evelyn Melum overheard and spontaneously offered her resort on Gull Lake – she would open it for the fishing opener and give everyone their own

cabin. Four couples enjoyed the weekend – the men fished and the women played Bridge, visited and enjoyed the beauty of the area. Thus, a tradition was born that continued for a few years.”

Lou thanks Evelyn and others for helping her through the deep grief that filled her days – more pain and loss would come later to the Traeders and OG friends and pastors were there for her.

Thanks be to God for one another.

### **Wisdom from our Centenarians**

So what is the secret for a long and healthy life? This is the question our Deacon co-moderator, Meg Robles, asked our centenarians.

Our oldest member, Evelyn Melum, who turns 101 this month, promptly responded with, “Good ancestors!” It’s true... good genes are a gift!

Glenn Pettit, who turned 100 in July said that in order to live a long life, eliminate stress. Adding an interest like art or woodworking in addition to family, work and church keeps you busy and provides an outlet.

Ken Hanson, the youngest of the oldest, just turned 100 in July, said, “To live this long, a good attitude is very important. Listen to your body – it’s always trying to tell you something. Be moderate in drinking. Ken feels that there has been an angel on his shoulder on every fork in the road, whispering which way to go. Artwork is keeping him alive, as well as reaching out to his daughter each night and staying in touch with family.

**Benediction:** God out from this worship into the world to serve God with gladness;

Be of good courage, Hold fast to what is good;

Render no one evil for evil; Strengthen the fainthearted;

Support the weak; Help the afflicted; Honor all people;

Love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.