

It's so easy to take things for granted—like walking into church on Sunday morning to worship

- That seems like a pretty normal thing to do, doesn't it?
- You'd expect it to happen like you'd expect to find books at the library
- But it's really not that simple at all—more than fifty years of St. Timothy's history went into preparing for the moment we're sharing right now

Our church had humble beginnings, meeting in a home in Littleton

- It was a mission outpost of St. George's in Englewood, whose Rector was Rev. Fred King—does the name sound familiar?
- Jerry King (whose 50th Wedding Anniversary we're celebrating today) was 11 or 12 when his dad first led worship in Littleton
- Jerry remembers helping to set up the altar rail and arrange chairs on Sunday mornings
- Who would have thought that a handful of people back in those days would plant the seeds of the lively congregation we have today?

Kind of like Abram and Sarah in our reading from Genesis, trying to make sense of God's promise that they'd be the grandparents of a great nation

- "Do not be afraid, Abram," the LORD said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able... So shall your descendants be." (*Genesis 15:1*)
- Somehow they believed the LORD, but it must have been quite a stretch at the time—just like it was for the folks in Littleton

Just like it was for the saints in Ephesus, to whom Paul was writing

- They were also just a handful of people, meeting in someone's home, often divided over questions of identity and purpose
- Paul prayed that they could "be strengthened...with power through (God's) Spirit," so they could comprehend "the breadth and length and height and depth of God's love and glory" (*Eph 3:16*)
- Who among them could have imagined that they were nurturing the seeds of one of the world's great religions?
- That one day millions of copies would be printed of Paul's letter to them?

- Impossible for people but not for God, “who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine”

Early one wintry Sunday morning, an acolyte came as usual to the house church in Littleton, to start a fire in the woodstove

- By the time other people arrived, the house was engulfed in flames, and soon their dreams were reduced to ashes
- That could easily have been the end for the little congregation, except that strengthened by Fr. King’s leadership, they believed that God could “accomplish abundantly” anything they could imagine
- They bought a building site “behind the mortuary” on Littleton Boulevard, constructing first a parish hall and then a proper church
- The congregation grew steadily, including in their members many young parents like Jerry & Cynny King

The Kings had been around the church for a while, but started attending more regularly once their sons were born

- They got even more involved after a conversation Jerry had with the Rector
- “He twisted my arm to join the choir,” Jerry reports, “and you know what happened next.”
- Friendships developed through that ministry, leading to a deeper sense of connection and more ministry opportunities

Jerry and Cynny are generous people, and they started using their gifts to build up the church

- Cynny joined the Daughters of the King and the Episcopal Church Women, taught in the Sunday School, and began her ministries of taking Communion to homebound members, visiting at Cherellyn Nursing Home, and offering prayers for healing
- Jerry served as both Junior and Senior Warden, before being elected to the Standing Committee of the Diocese
- Their stories remind us of other families at the heart of St. Timothy’s over the years: the Carsons and Bonners, Fosdicks and Rices, Atchisons and Hales, and many others I’m sure

- Through the power of the Spirit working within them, and because they were so generous in offering their gifts, the original handful of Episcopalians in Littleton expanded many-fold

So much so that in the mid-90's Jerry headed a long-range planning committee, which explored the opportunities for St. Timothy's future

- As their facilities became more crowded and population growth shifted south to Highlands Ranch, the leaders began to dream big dreams
- What if they could find a larger facility, in a more prominent location, with a beautiful worship space?
- Well, as every house-hunter knows, two out of three isn't bad

A bulk-mailed postcard fell into Jerry's hands, advertising a church for sale on Dry Creek Boulevard

- The first time he walked in here, Jerry wondered "whether this barn could ever be an Episcopal church"
- It looked different in those days—most everything at this end of the room is new
- Picture a long stage running along the back wall with ranks of theater lights hanging from the ceiling—on the stage was a lectern and a drum set and a hot tub for baptisms
- There was no center aisle for processions—the seats had to be cut apart and reassembled
- There was no organ, of course—a custom installation was created just for this space
- The elevator, a handicapped restroom, and carpeting were installed, a new playground was built—you get the idea

What made those people believe it was really possible to raise millions of dollars and renovate this building?

- Like the descendants of Abram and Sarah, like those early Christians in Ephesus, they got a sense of "the breadth and length and height and depth" of God's love, and wanted to share it with others
- They counted on being strengthened by the power of the Spirit, and it worked!
- They did their part in that time: worshiping faithfully and giving generously of their time and talents and money

So when you arrive here on a Sunday morning, keep in mind what it took for this to become an Episcopal church

- Don't assume that holding worship is automatic: dozens of people helped to make today's service possible, and a hundred and fifty families pledge their offerings to pay for staff salaries and other expenses
- Like the mortgage, which has been dramatically reduced to just under \$800,000, or the new boiler we're going to need before next winter
- Remember that the stalwart families who've been financially supporting the church for decades were all new once, just getting started with their pledges
- We've inherited an incredible legacy, and it's our turn to carry it forward and leave it in better shape for the next generation
- In an ironic twist, we've been joined in the past year by quite a group of people from St. George's, which planted our church decades ago but sadly closed its doors last summer
- We regret the circumstances but welcome all of you to St. Timothy's

Jerry told me this week his hope is that St. Timothy's will continue to be a vital place of worship and to serve the neighborhood

- Lots of people are suffering from hard times, and we're delighted that Deacon Cammie has helped to organize a task force on homelessness in Littleton, and that soon we'll be hosting a regional organizing meeting
- Our members continue to serve at the House of Hope, a shelter for homeless single moms and their kids: cooking meals, reading stories, and working in the garden
- Later this month we'll have a series of events to support relief efforts in Haiti
- These are just some of the ways that our Samaritan Outreach committee invites us into making a difference in the wider community

Jerry and another longtime member have decided that the church's annual financial struggles might have a purpose after all—they see more people pitching in as a result of the challenges

- Jerry hopes that others will embrace the opportunities he and Cynny have had to build up St. Timothy's congregation and reach out to our neighbors
- If each of us does our part, giving a portion of our time and money to the church, the cumulative result will be huge

We've inherited the welcoming atmosphere that's been established here and the rich traditions forming the foundation of our worship

- Especially for an Episcopal church, we're blessed by having all the generations present, with great programs for youth and children and lots of new families
- We're doing more than ever to serve people in need and show a commitment to growing in faith throughout our lifetimes
- But don't lost sight of the fact that we can't take credit for all this stuff!

These signs of vitality are not our doing, but evidence that God "is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine."

- So go ahead—I dare you to dream big dreams
- I invite you to do your part in offering time and talent and treasure to make them come true
- And I ask you to join in raising up the only prayer that makes sense right now: Thanks be to God!