

Dear Union Presbyterian Church,

I am writing to you to share a few memories of Union Presbyterian Church during my time as pastor from 1998 to 2004. This is in celebration of your 200th anniversary. I apologize that I will not be able to be in attendance but I wish you all the best for your celebration and wish you many good years of ministry ahead of you as well.

When Laura and I came to Union, our daughter Claire was only one month old and Maggie was a preschooler and Nate was only in grade school. We had just moved from North Carolina. I remember Claire in the playpen out in the front of the manse while we moved in with many of you all helping out with the move and with watching our children as well. During our tenure the playground in the back was built. I have many fond memories of the children of the church playing on that play ground with the tire chips on the ground. Our kids used to come back home with their feet absolutely black from playing in the tire chips. On Wednesday nights, the children from LOGOS would be out in the yard and all over the playground playing.

Of course you cannot be at Union Presbyterian Church and not have experienced the Christmas play each year with the live animals. It seems every year one of the doves tied to the top of the barn would break loose and start flying around the sanctuary and then someone would have to run and turn off the ceiling fan. I remember one year we had a live donkey tied up at the front of the church next to the door. One boy put his finger in the donkey's mouth. The donkey closed his mouth on the boy's finger and would not let go until the owner coaxed him to let go. It was always great fun to see what the live animals would be up to each year. And of course, the Christmas story was always presented in a way that was tangible to all who came to experience it.

Nothing can beat the majesty of worship at Union Presbyterian Church. With the high ceilings, stained glass and beautiful woodwork, worship was always an uplifting experience. Our organist, Polly, played the organ like a 25 year old, even though she was retired. The choir was always well rehearsed and sang with skill and a spirit of worship.

Living in Lancaster it was always fascinating to see what the Amish were up to. I remember seeing several hundred Amish young adults set up volleyball nets on the church parking lot in order to play. The poles for the nets were tied to the buggies to hold them upright. I remember the Amish neighbors coming to the Christmas play as well.

Our time at Union involved some heartbreak and tragedy. As a church, Union had to work through grief and loss during my tenure. It deeply affected me as your pastor, and finding joy in ministry was difficult at times but not impossible. As a church we learned to trust God's hand in the world and his timing as well. Some deep relationships between friends at Union were formed in ways that would not have been possible in normal circumstances.

I will close by saying that it gives me joy to contribute to your 200th anniversary in the small way and I pray that you experience the joy of knowing Christ and being in fellowship with one another.

Rev. Greg Wiest