

Ps 150; Ac 5:27-32; Rev 1:4-8; Jn 20:19-31

Evidence of Christ's Love in the World – The Church

A young woman from Banks, Oregon was summoned to court by a neighbor who complained about her barking dogs. At one point, the judge asked the neighbor a question. The neighbor didn't reply. "Sir, are you going to answer me?"

The neighbor leaped to his feet. "Are you talking to me, Judge?" he asked. "Sorry; I can't hear a darn thing."

The case was dismissed. (rd.com/jokes)

We all believe our town is the best place in the whole world to live. But proof – or actual evidence – is a challenge. Banks, Oregon is a wonderful place to make a home – to rear a family – with peaceful country vistas and great people. Proof? Well, have you got time? I'll need time to tell my stories – to show you around – have you seen the lovely church on Depot Street? It's a gem! This church is part of what makes Banks a great place to live.

Today, we're part of the global United Methodist Church, with about 12 million members

worldwide. But, the Wesleyan Christians – number about 70 million in all. John Wesley founded the Methodist movement in the mid-eighteenth century in England. He never intended to create a new church, only to re-awaken his own Anglican Church. Here we are three hundred years later to “spread Scriptural holiness across the land,” as Wesley put it. He taught that Christian living is to practice the means of grace. Wesley says scriptural holiness is the combination of personal holiness (a transformation of the heart) and social holiness (a transformation of the world). (umc.org) Our disciplines consist of: the study of the Bible, prayer, fasting, works of mercy (mission and ministry), regularly receiving Holy Communion and offering Baptism to those who sincerely profess faith in Christ; Christian conferencing (meaning that we gather regularly to encourage each other and hold each other accountable in our Christian life and faith) and financial generosity. (christchurchumc.org)

The Methodist Episcopal Church sent Rev. Jason Lee with the Wyeth party to Ft Vancouver near the coast of what would eventually become the

State of Oregon. His stated purpose in 1834 was to bring “the Book of Heaven” to the Salish People in that area. Success in that mission was limited by circumstances, social pressures and the devastation of diseases brought to the Native peoples by British and American colonists.

Eventually, Rev. Lee was sent to the Willamette Valley, near what is now Salem, Oregon. And regular pastoral circuits were established in our area: Salem Circuit, Oregon City, Portland, Yamhill Circuit, Marys River Circuit, the Astoria and the Clatsop Circuits. A circuit is a cluster of Bible study groups, or class meetings who have an ordained or a lay preacher assigned to shepherd them. Classes are organized into Societies that meet from time to time to worship, study and encourage one another – and to eat really good home cooking. After a Society has been in existence for a while, a congregation may form.

Banks Methodists (MEC) first met as a society in homes and in the school building.

The first pastor in those days was Rev. Charles L. Creesy.

This building was built and commissioned March 25th, 1909 – where you are sitting today. It cost \$2,600 and was cleared of outstanding amounts at the dedication service with an offering of \$967.00. The first pastor was Rev. William Clyde Stewart, appointed to Banks and Fir Grove out of the Salem Circuit. You may see the names of the first Building Committee and Board of Trustees in our church scrap books. They are on display today.

All the effort, loving care and organization of being the church are poured out in order to continue to share the evidence of Jesus' love in the world. Back in 1st c Jerusalem, when Jesus-followers were just beginning to preach and teach and minister to their neighbors, the established religious body of the day hauled them into the temple to answer for their unauthorized activities. That establishment did not permit preaching in the name of Jesus Christ. But Peter and the other disciples told the officials: "He (Jesus) is the one...God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance...and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and *so is* the Holy

Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.” (Ac 5:31-32)

We are witnesses of Jesus. We bring evidence from the Scriptures and by inspiration from the blessed Holy Spirit.

After Jesus rose from the dead, He appeared in the upper room one evening – without opening the doors. Our friend, known as Doubting Thomas, was there that night. Remember, Thomas said, “Unless I see the nail-marks, I won’t believe.”

Jesus said, “Peace be with you.” Then He showed Thomas the nail scars from His crucifixion. At last, Thomas believed. He saw with his own eyes – and felt with his own hands. “My Lord and my God!” he exclaimed. Jesus asked Thomas, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

This is the church’s story. This is our story – the story of Banks Community United Methodist Church. We are witnesses of Jesus’ power and His

love – still sharing with everybody we can.
Amen.