

*Sermons for a Season of Celebration:
The 275th Anniversary Year of First Presbyterian Church
Carlisle PA*

Preface

These sermons were my privilege to preach during the year of the 275th anniversary of First Presbyterian Church. Six sermons were preached on “Century Service” Sundays. Each service included hymns, prayers, and other customs of worship for particular fifty year periods in the church’s history. My intention with these sermons was to hold the church’s local history next to the much wider history in our nation and in Presbyterian Church history. In the mix of all this history, where could God’s Spirit be discerned at work in the particular history of this one congregation? As I reflect on this intention now that the anniversary year is complete, it seems rather ambitious! My hope is that, by God’s grace, at least some insight has been gained, the life of the congregation has been enriched, and God has been served.

Other sermons tapped into the rich resources of our history in other ways. The first sermon offered the opportunity to reflect on both past and future at the beginning of the anniversary year. Resonances of this sermon are found in the sermon preached at our sister congregation, Silver Spring Presbyterian, when Rev. Donald Steele and I exchanged pulpits early in February. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, as well as the ordination and installation of officers, found connection with the church’s history, too. The celebration of the 500th birthday of John Calvin, our Presbyterian forebear, was a chance to “interview” Calvin and find links to the present day. I thank Deb Madden and Chris Gulotta for participating in this sermon. Of course, the sermon on October 25 celebrated the faithfulness of God, shown in the continuing life of the congregation which serves Jesus Christ today from the meeting house on the Square.

Also included are remarks and the dedicatory prayer from the windy Day of Pentecost dedication of the refurbished Meeting House Springs Cemetery.

The “resources” section at the end of each sermon refers to materials which aided in the development of these sermons. Our own church history books, session minutes, and records, as well as books on the shelves at Dickinson College library, combined with commentaries and stories shared to tell some of the wide story of First Presbyterian Church and, hopefully, God’s faithfulness.

Thanks, too, to members of the congregation who requested that these sermons be printed, and to the 275th Anniversary Committee for its support in making this printing possible.

To God be the glory.

Rev. Jon A. Black