

**“Lasting Legacies”**  
**Acts 1:115-17, 21-26**  
**May 28, 2006**  
**San Dimas Community Church, UCC**  
**Rev. Joyce Kirk-Moore**

William James, the great philosopher said, “The greatest use of a life is that it be spent on something that outlasts itself.” Memorial Day is often a time to remember those who have gone before us and to think about their lasting legacies. Perhaps tomorrow you’ll visit a grave site or spend time remembering your loved ones and what they spent their lives doing that even today lives on. When we think about our own lives, we often have a clear idea about how we wish to be remembered.

I find it strange that this text in Acts is selected on a Memorial Day weekend Sunday. Matthias is chosen as an apostle and then we never hear about him again. One wonders just why he was in the running. It’s mentioned that they needed an apostle who could witness to the resurrection but of course, women were the first to witness that event. Why weren’t Mary or Mary Magdalene considered? They didn’t even make it to the finals! This text shows how important it was that scripture was fulfilled, and to fulfill scripture, they needed twelve apostles so quite literally, by God, they got them.

Earlier in Jesus’ ministry, he encounters a woman who did something outrageous. She took costly oil and anointed Jesus’ feet with it, much to the disapproval of those watching. But Jesus defends her and says that “wherever the gospel is proclaimed in all the world, it will be done in memory of her.” What a legacy! In fact, we hear the story of this woman more often than we hear about Matthias.

What will our lasting legacies be--not just as individuals but as church? What will people 100 years from now say about San Dimas Community Church, United Church of Christ? What difference will others say we made in our community and our world? Will we be like Matthias, a kind of place holder, with little said about us in future years? I don’t think so.

After a little over a year as your pastor, I offer these observations. The legacy of San Dimas Community Church, United Church of Christ is first, we are a community that deeply cares about each other. We’re in each others business in good ways. We’re family!

Beyond these walls, we are rooted in our community and we value our past and present within this community that surrounds us. Because of our history we have a sense of belonging within this community and we reach out to minister to it through our hunger kitchen and in other ways.

Another lasting legacy is that we value children and youth. Churches don’t always cherish the gifts of the young who are sometimes loud, boisterous, and make messes. But you do! Your devotion and support of youth made this church a place where I believed I could fit in, because children are important to me too.

I see here the legacy of a “can do” spirit. This is manifested by your mere survival through difficult times and your commitment to a future in this place, even in this building. It may be hard to see all that buildings and grounds has done in the last few months, but they are working hard. Soon we will have new windows in Tangeman Hall to replace the broken and hazardous ones. Other projects are ongoing; some are not so noticeable but just as important.

Another lasting legacy is your commitment to the United Church of Christ. I know this has not always been part of your past, but it is today, and it is demonstrated through your participation in the mission of the UCC. We are a five for five church! Before I even came here, you had implemented being one of the UCC churches that give to the five mission offerings that sustain our churches world wide. I’m proud of that because I know the UCC to be a place of welcome for many people without a spiritual home. As part of the UCC we have more ways to connect with the world.

I read this week a story about the UCC Wider Ministries. In the rural provinces of China, most families live on less than \$400 a year. Many peasant farmers learned they could make money selling their blood; but private companies drew blood with contaminated needles and HIV was

transmitted. Now more than half the villagers of Henan province are infected, and hundreds of children have been orphaned. In 2004 through our UCC Wider Ministries, we sponsored over 50 orphans with food, care, and schooling. The dilapidated Chengliu Primary School was repaired. In 2005 an orphanage was built.

One farmer, Guanggui Li, has two children supported by the UCC Child Sponsorship program. His wife died of AIDS. Last fall, his home and 25 other homes of families affected by AIDS were destroyed by heavy rains. The fallen house was the only thing Guanggui had, so he and his children slept outside near the rubble. With the cold winter approaching, One Great Hour of Sharing quickly sent \$25,000 of emergency funds to Henan and with the help of local families all 25 homes were rebuilt in only one month. This is one example of how being part of something larger than ourselves helps us to be spent on something that outlasts ourselves. Of course, we can't do everything, but as Mother Theresa said, "we can do small things with great love."

A couple of weeks ago I was asked what my vision for this church was. At first I was a little taken aback because I wouldn't dare to impose my vision on you. That's not my style of leadership. But what I enjoy is watching a vision bubble up from within, from you in the pews. This emerging vision is composed of dreams you dream and of your particular gifts to give. It's like the church is a giant puzzle with many pieces that fit together and compliment the whole. I love putting puzzles together!

I suppose if I could impose a suggestion it would have to do with our ministry with children because I see children as an underrepresented and sometimes discriminated against group who have little voice in what happens to them. They are often subject to the whims of the grownups who have power over them or to societal structures that limit them. It's interesting that Cher chose this particular slide for the sermon title showing different children linked arm in arm. Perhaps we could ponder if there might be further ways we could extend our love for children that might touch more of them. This might be as simple as tutoring some of our children or helping with after school activities or planning a special event for them. Remember it is often small things done with great love that change our world.

Whatever our future legacies, individually and as a church may be, what is real is the here and now in which we find ourselves incredibly blessed. It must have been that same emotion of being immeasurably blessed by Jesus that caused the woman with the alabaster jar of costly ointment to pour it on Jesus and anoint him, and we still tell her story and the story of God's love, in memory of her. May we mirror her depth of gratitude proclaiming a good news that wells up within our hearts and causes us to sing the offering Bob Dewey gave us earlier today:

*My life flows on in endless song; above earth's lamentation,  
I hear the sweet, though far-off hymn that hails a new creation,  
Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear the music ringing;  
It finds an echo in my soul--how can I keep from singing?*