



All interviews conducted by Bob Paulus

### Inside this issue:

Dee Strickler

Dudley Rose

Flossie Fletcher

Jack Fletcher

Tom Brown

The Road:

Contact Information



When I think of Dee, I can't help but picture a legend. Dee was the *MAN*. He was unpretentious, humble, modest, and oh-so-cool in a detached sort of way.

## Dee Strickler:

I grew up in Milton, Oregon. As a boy, I was pretty much a free spirit, roaming the hills, exploring. I fished most of the length of the Walla Walla River. I loved camping and hiking and was a Boy Scout. My dad was the gasoline distributor for Standard Oil and my mom was a home-maker. I had one older brother.

In high school, I lettered in every sport they had. I spent my summers working in the pea fields on the weevil crew and driving "cat" in wheat harvest. My dad was a sports fanatic. He talked me into repeating the 7<sup>th</sup> grade so I would be a year older for playing football in high school, much to my mother's disgust. That backfired because after my junior year in 1945, I enlisted in the Navy to avoid the draft. I was stationed at Pearl Harbor for a year and got my high school diploma while in the Navy. (The school gave me some missing credits.) After discharge I attended Washington State University in Pullman and earned a bachelor's degree in Forestry.

After WSU, I went to Syracuse University in New York for graduate work. There I had a blind date with one Claire Church. When I graduated with a M. S., Claire and I were engaged. Claire was a junior so I took a job in Lebanon, OR at a plywood plant. One year later I drove to Great Falls and

Beneath that quiet, unassuming, persona of 80 plus years of living, Dee Strickler was a power-house of knowledge, wisdom, and wit few ever caught more than a fleeting glimpse of. Why?—simply because Dee wanted it that way.

Years ago, I asked Dee if he would consent to being featured in Koinonia. He replied, "No. Don't think I want to do that." Much later when I was running low on people to feature, Dee approached me and said, "If you need someone for filler, I'd be the man to do it."

I thought Dee probably wouldn't have a whole lot to say. To my pleasant surprise, he talked so much about his spectacular life, I finally had to tell him I was going to have to trim it down to basics just to make it fit. Yes, there were that many basics!

A heck of a guy! Our church is so much poorer for his loss but heaven gained a giant of a man. Here's Dee Strickler:

flew to Syracuse to get married. We were married in the University Chapel on the same day Claire graduated. We were going to see Glacier Park on our honeymoon but it was shrouded in clouds.

After a year in Lebanon, Claire and I were both dissatisfied with our jobs, so we moved to a fruit ranch on the Snake River below Clarkston, WA that my dad had bought. Our first two children were born in Clarkston. The Corps of Engineers was going to build a dam that would flood our fruit acres, so I went to Washington State and obtained a job on the faculty. I started as an acting Jr. Wood Technologist in the Division of Industrial Research, College of Engineering. Nineteen years later I resigned as full professor of Materials Science with 60 publications to my credit and two patents. This was all research that included particle board, finger jointing, trusses, and glu-lam beams. I took a year's leave of absence from WSU to study for my PhD at Duke University.

We have three children: Jack, Zoe, and Walter. I was a scoutmaster with the Boy Scouts while in Pullman and took scouts on long hikes including a 100-mile hike in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Our family enjoyed backpacking, but Claire couldn't stand to kill a fish so she'd go looking for wildflowers while I fished. This led to a later occupation for me.

One day a man named Keith Taylor from

Whitefish came to visit me. He wanted to build a machine to finger-joint lumber using my process. I left WSU and we moved to Whitefish in 1976 to form the Strickler-Taylor Lumber Co. This venture lasted almost four years until high interest rates shut us down. In 1979 we made one board measuring 554 feet long and John Carpenter's Jr. High kids carried it in the Winter Carnival Parade. We tried to enter it in Guinness' Book of World Records as the world's longest board, but they had no such category.

We have attended Whitefish Presbyterian Church since 1976. In 1982, Pastor Ken Peterson wanted to build an addition to the church. We raised \$30,000 which was enough to get the project started and trusted the Lord to provide the rest to complete the work. I did the design work for the addition and had a draftsman draw up the working plans. Once we got started, the money starting rolling in and we completed it in one year with no debt. Most of the work was done by men at FPC with some specialty work subbed out to contractors. I decided to add trusses to the roof which turned out to be a good thing because the winter of 1996 brought five feet of snow to the roof. It held!

I used to hike with the *Over the Hill Gang*. Every Thursday, we'd hike to Glacier Park. Eventually my legs couldn't handle it anymore. I had been photographing wild

flowers for 20 years and decided to publish wild flower books. I did three books on wild flowers of the northern Rockies: *Prairie, Forest and Alpine Wildflowers*. *Wayside Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest* came next, followed by *Northwest Penstemons*.

I still have a vegetable garden (which I share with the deer) and three wild flower beds. I love singing in the choir and have served as a Deacon and Financial Secretary for several years. You'll see me in the kitchen washing dishes once in a while, too.

I'd like to see our church grow, especially with young families. We need to keep the faith in our church and bring more people into our fellowship.



## Dudley Rose:



I still call western Pennsylvania home because I went through my college years there. My dad was a Presbyterian minister as was his dad. Four of my dad's brothers were Presbyterian ministers and also one of my cousins.

Presbyterian ministry has been a family business in the best sense of the word.

Both my and my wife Dorothy's parents are deceased. I had a sister who also is deceased. So family for me is our three daughters, nine grand children, and the church family.

I grew up in Ellwood City, PA. At the beginning of my senior year in high school we moved to Erie, PA. I was very active in athletics and immediately started on the football team. The following year, I accepted a football scholarship from the University of Cincinnati. I admit I did not study to the best of my abilities and almost became ineligible to play. The football staff wanted me to major in Phys Ed to stay in school but I knew I didn't want to do that so I transferred to a small Presbyterian school named Muskingum College in New Concord, Ohio. Its claim to fame is the astronaut and Senator John Glenn who graduated from Muskingum.

I majored in History with a minor in English. I didn't play much football after experiencing a shoulder injury. I wasn't worth much as a quarterback if I couldn't raise my arm to throw a football. I had great coaching through those years and learned the game really well.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree, I had to decide what I was going to do with my life. I kind of put a Gideon's fleece

out and made a deal with God that said I'm only going to apply to one Seminary. If I am accepted I will take this as a sign that God wants me in the ministry. If not, I'll do something else. All my family had graduated from Pittsburg Theological Seminary. I wanted something different so I applied at Princeton Theological Seminary. They accepted me. Three years later, I graduated with a Master of Divinity degree.

Princeton was a good school for me. It offered perspectives from both liberal and conservative views with everything thrown in that was between. They encouraged those going into the parish ministry to search to discover their own conclusions regarding the interpretation of scripture.

My first call came from a church in western Pennsylvania named Westfield Presbyterian Church. They were wonderful patient people helping me starting out in my ministry call. I got married to my first wife while at Westfield and we had two children.

After four years, I decided to accept a position at Grove City College in western Pennsylvania as college Chaplain. I also did some teaching there. My time spent at Groves City lasted three years and I decided to return to parish ministry accepting a call from The First Presbyterian in Canfield, Ohio. It was a large church with over 1300 members. After two years at Canfield, unfortunately, my former wife and I decided to end our marriage. This was very traumatic to all the family including the church so I took a year off from the ministry. This was a period of personal doubt as I did not know if I was fit for the ministry after being divorced. Divorce was a very uncommon thing for pastors at the time. I went to work selling household cleaning products to grocery store chains for James Austin Company.

During this period is when I met Dorothy. She was working in the Synod office of PCUSA and I was looking for a way to get

back into the life of the church. We dated for about a year, got married, and recently celebrated our 35th year together. We have one daughter who is the youngest of our three girls.

Dorothy convinced me to reconsider my decision to stay out of ordained ministry. After much sole searching and encouragement from Dorothy, I sought a call and received it from a Pennsylvania church in Ellwood City. This was the same town my dad had pastored in. I served in Ellwood City for 10 years. Nine of those years I coached high school football. We won the western Pennsylvania championship in 1985.

Dorothy and I decided to make another move. I answered a call to Jacksonville, Florida as Organizing Pastor of a new church development. In less than two years, we had a couple hundred members. I spent 10 years there and decided to serve as an interim pastor for a couple of years. Interim work was fine with me but I did get a call to serve in a church in McDonough, Georgia. I served there for 12 years and decided it was a great place to finish up my full-time ministry. I had just been elected moderator of the Greater Atlanta Presbytery which is the largest in the country and this kept me plenty busy during the first year of retirement. I still had a yearning to serve as a pastor so I called Ed Albright asking if he knew of a church they needed an interim. Ed told me about FPC in Whitefish. I applied and here I am. Dorothy will be out in June. She works for the public school system in Atlanta and only has five weeks off during the summer.

God has really blessed me over the years. Sure, I've had rough spots along the way but my journey as a pastor has been an incredible journey with lots of fun thrown in. I'm looking forward to continuing that journey with the good folks at Whitefish FPC.

## Flossie Fletcher:



I'm a Whitefish native being born and raised here. We lived on Second Street East and I still own the house I grew up in. My dad was a dispatcher for the Great Northern Railroad for 42 years. My mom was a homemaker

raising my older sister and I.

In 1950, I graduated from Whitefish High School and decided to attend the Minneapolis School of Business in Minnesota. The school offered a nine month course with training in book keeping and general secretarial duties. After graduation, I went to work for the Navy Civilian Department in Seattle where I lived with my aunt. The department where I worked was called SUPSHIP (Supervisor of Ship Building) on Harbor Island. It was a facility where civilian contractors built ships for the navy. After a time, I board and roomed at Green Lake, Washington and it was while working there that I met Jack during a visit to my sister and her husband who lived in Portland, Oregon. I ended up moving to Portland and lived with them. Jack was based in Portland and after dating for a few months, we decided to get married. This was in 1954. We've been married for 56 years.

Jack's work territory was in California

and he would be gone for weeks at a time. He made a request and got to move to California to be closer to his work. We moved to Redding, California which was the hub of the lumber industry for the area.

Jack would be gone during the week but came home on weekends. He spent a lot of time in Eureka where there were several large lumber mills. Our three boys were born in Redding. We lived there from 1956 to 1966 then moved back to the Portland office. Eventually, the company transferred Jack to the home office in Kansas City, Missouri. Overland Park, just outside Kansas City, became our new home for the next two years. Jack was given the option of transferring either to the east coast or back to the west. He opted for the west so we moved back to Portland and lived in the suburb of Beaverton. Our youngest son started first grade in Portland and the other two finished junior high and high school there. The boys all went on to college and eventually got married. We have eight grand children.

During these years, we came to Whitefish frequently to visit my family. When Jack turned 62 in 1988, he decided to retire. There was never any question as to where we wanted to live during our retirement years and we immediately made the move to Whitefish. We walked into our home on Columbia Avenue and bought it within the hour.

It was natural for us to attend the Presbyterian Church in Whitefish. It was where

I grew up. When I was young, Reverend Daane was the pastor. The church was like a second home to us. All the activities took place in the basement where the women cooked and boys played basketball. I recall us kids doing Christmas plays on the stage down there along with the sanctuary upstairs depending on what was going on. Those memories of the church activities and family life are very special to me.

Shortly after moving to Whitefish, Jack and I began doing volunteer work for the Stump Town Historical Society in Whitefish. They eventually located in the Depot building. We've been working there for over 20 years. I also volunteer at the Soroptimist Thrift Shop. We became members of the Moose Club and still enjoy attending their functions. We love Whitefish and have been active in city affairs but that has slowed over the years. We used to go to all the high school ball games but they start too late now.

Over the years, I've always been active in Presbyterian Women and served as a Deacon off and on. Several years ago, Vivian Hull, Linda Nelson, Caroline Pfrimmer, and I wrote "Centennial" which is a documented history of FPC in Whitefish. It's available in the church library.

The only thing I can think to say about our church's future is I'd like to see a bible teaching pastor come to our church who puts an emphasis on the teaching of scripture and who is filled with the Holy Spirit.



## Jack Fletcher:



I was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma. When I was a very young age, my family moved to Kansas City, Kansas. My father worked for Packard Motorcar Company and my mom was a

stay-at-home mom raising my older sister and me.

In 1942, I graduated from high school and immediately joined the Navy. I was in

flight training stationed at several Navy air stations throughout the country. Toward the end of the war, I was on an aircraft carrier.

In 1946, after the war ended and I was discharged from the navy, I returned to Kansas City and earned a Civil Engineering degree from Finlay Engineering College.

I went to work for Lumbermen's Underwriting Alliance, a reciprocal insurance exchange that specialized in providing insurance on large lumber manufacturing plants. The company was located in Kansas City and I traveled extensively in the southern states.

In 1954, there was an opening in the

Portland, Oregon office so I made the move doing the same job I was doing in Kansas City providing insurance for the lumber companies around the region.

I met Flossie in Portland through her brother-in-law who worked for the same company I did. We married in 1956. My insurance territory was the state of California but we continued to live in Portland. I traveled a great deal covering many states over the years. Flossie and I were married at FPC in Whitefish. Her parents lived in Whitefish and we frequently traveled here to visit.

I retired in 1988 after 38 years of working for the company. There was never any question as to where we wanted to live after

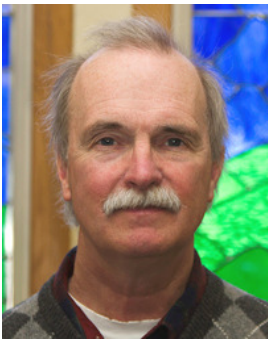
retirement and we immediately moved to Whitefish. Flossie had grown up in the Presbyterian Church so it was natural that we attend FPC when we moved here.

As far as hobbies go, until I retired and moved over here, my work was my hobby. During my working travels, I had come to Montana meeting with lumber companies and met a lot of lumbermen throughout the state. One person I got to know was Ivan O'Neil. He owned a lot of the western lumber yards and I insured his properties. Ivan was an enthusiastic hiker and loved to hike

the trails of Glacier Park. He hiked every Thursday with a group of friends mostly from Kalispell. They called themselves "The Over the Hill Gang". In 1989, I started hiking with this group of adventurers tramping the trails of Glacier Park. This continued for 12 years. We climbed mountains, scouted lakes, and had a lot of fun. I was into photography and took many memorable photos on these outings. Dee Strickler was one of our hikers and a lot of Dee's photos of wildflowers were taken close to the trails we traveled. I still hike with one guy from the original group on Thursdays.



## Tom Brown:



I was born in Phillipsburg, Pennsylvania. When I was 10 years old, we moved to Sunbury, Pennsylvania where my father worked as a pharmacist and my mom was a nurse. She also taught piano and

directed the church choir in the Methodist church we attended.

I had two older brothers and a sister. My brothers are both deceased but my sister lives in Michigan.

After high school graduation I was offered a scholarship to attend college in Adrian, Michigan. Adrian College is a small school not far from Ann Harbor. Interestingly, Adrian is famous for the original barbed wire production in this country.

I felt very fortunate to be able to attend college as most high school graduates from Sunbury were trained in the technical trades while in high school and only a few went on to college.

I earned a bachelor's degree in biology and went on to graduate work at Michigan State University. My career choice was Entomology (the study of insects). I eventually earned a master's and went on to obtain my PhD degree. I stayed at Michigan State doing a post-doctorate study on insecticides.

In 1978, I accepted a job offer at Clemson University in South Carolina as an Assistant Professor. I taught toxicology of insecticides but most of my appointment

was for research. The farmers in the area were having insect problems, mostly in cotton, and I worked closely with them. I also got involved with committee work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In 1981, President Regan dramatically increased the defense budget. My laboratory received a contract that enabled me to improve my lab and hire several employees. The Iran versus Iraq war was raging and the government was concerned about Iraq's chemical weapons. My lab completed one of close to 400 contracts nationwide working on chemical defense.

After 26 years at Clemson, I retired in 2003 and formed a company, GENECTAR, and moved back to Michigan State University doing research and consulting. My work was varied and included writing a text book on toxicology.

During the 1990s, a friend from California and I backpacked in Glacier Park. I loved this area and bought a house in Whitefish and a cottage house in town and a small pasture with wood lot. The land provides space for me to build a lab and when completed, I'll do research and consulting through my company. I presently have a grant through Health and Human Services to find a cure for metastatic melanoma. I'm continuing a family tradition from my father's and grandfather's trade of pharmaceuticals.

FPC attracted me with the liturgy format of the service. I especially like the weekly confession, affirmation, and Lord's Prayer. I have a daughter, Annie, who sang a duet with me at FPC.

I enjoy skiing Big Mountain from the Snow Bus, hiking Glacier's trails from the new shuttle bus system, riding my bicycle

Flossie and I enjoy doing work with the Historical Society in Whitefish. I got involved with it originally because they needed insurance and I helped them get it. I served on the board of directors while the society was remodeling the depot building. I enjoy civic work and was involved with getting the Whitefish Resort Tax implemented. I've also served on the Whitefish Lake Institute.

The only changes I can think of concerning FPC is I, like most, would like to see more young people at our church.

year round, cutting fireweed, letting my two cats out,... in, out, in, out..., auctions on the internet, and BCC News. I've lived in Japan and have a collection of maps and books in Japanese.

I'm involved with a local lay ministry at the county jail. The group isn't officially organized. It's just that it is the same people who come to the county jail every week to minister to the inmates. A man who acts as an ad hoc coordinator for our ministry is approved to conduct services for the inmates on Saturdays. He takes notes of those who come to Christ and gives these names to us who come to the jail on Monday evenings. These inmates can only get one visit with anyone per week. If he or she has chosen to use that one visit seeking spiritual guidance, it is significant. I feel the Holy Spirit is really working in this ministry. Did you know that 20% of county prisoners are women?

I would like to see FPC get a pastor who is focused on growth. We need to grow our membership and hopefully, attract more young adults. However, I also feel it is up to God to provide the pastor this church needs and He will act through our prayers. Sometimes a church can set up too rigid of a job description for a pastor that hampers the working of the Holy Spirit. We need to keep options open to allow God to work his will in providing the pastor. Sometimes what people think they want is not what God wants for them. Let His will be done.

I think people need to get outside themselves to really find the Holy Spirit. Jesus was looking for people to serve. When we serve others, our own problems become minuscule. I thank God for all the new friends I've made at FPC. It is a wonderful place to praise the Lord.

# WHAT I WANT IN A PASTOR

I asked a few people at random to contribute their thoughts to the question: "What would you like to see in our new pastor?" Below are the responses:

I pray that we receive a pastor who is passionate about his/her walk with the Lord, and calls us to a deeper relationship with God and with each other so that together we can live out what it truly means to be reconciled. He or she must be honest and with a kind-hearted spirit. He or she must be a gifted communicator of the written word. He/she must be a gifted communicator on grace, truth, joy, peace, love, and forgiveness.

The pastor must be organized in his daily work. He/she must deliver inspiring sermons that are thought provoking and encouraging--so that we can apply that message into our upcoming week's walk with the Lord. He/she must care deeply about "his or her flock" which means that he or she would be there for individuals with health issues, family problems, and/or other life situations. He/she must be an assertive leader to help us "think outside the box" to find ways to encourage and invite young children/adults and families to our church where they will see that God is clearly present in the lives of all who gather there.

I certainly want a pastor who has the gift of preaching and possibly teaching. However, I think it's best to trust God to send us the right person for the job. After all, he sent Jesus who was not who the people were looking for; but he turned out to be the right man for the job. So basically, whatever happens will be fine.

I am looking for the following qualities in a new pastor: Some one who is personally mature, warm, and kind. One who is welcoming of diversity, as Jesus was. One who demonstrates a deep personal relationship with the Lord through heart-felt prayers and relationships with the people to whom she/he ministers. A good preacher who gives me something to think about from the sermon. A teacher who involves the audience. I learn better if I am part of the dialogue. An organized administrator who knows how to delegate and prioritize issues. A leader who facilitates the growth of volunteers and support staff. A

person eager to help this congregation serve the needs of this community (e.g. to become locally missional).

A pastor needs to be humble, kind, compassionate, and approachable. Also he should be Christ centered in his teaching. I would like him to be not only a teacher but a facilitator who invites participation and discussion.

The pastor should be open, friendly, agreeable to suggestions and change, flexible, and possess a good sense of humor. The pastor should not express his political views while conducting his official duties.

I am looking forward to not only a new leader for our congregation but also a new friend to welcome into our unique loving family--someone we can enfold and nurture not only as a pastor but as a member of our church body.

What I'd like to see in a pastor? Someone who is all-knowing, able to foresee and squelch any controversy before it happens, the ability to know someone is in need of a hospital visit without being told that person is there, completely unselfish and humble, and---, you get the idea. Oh wait, maybe that is unrealistic in a human being. Probably only Jesus could measure up to that. Let me start over.

Our new Pastor should have leadership abilities to address the various problems that exist in our church. Such as: steps in front of our building need repair and the screen and projector need to be moved to a permanent location. Our Pastor should be able to motivate individuals equipped with the appropriate gifts and strengths to resolve these issues in a timely fashion. To give an example: If the roof needs replacing but there is no money to do so, our Pastor should be able to motivate a fundraising campaign so the job will be accomplished.

I, as a church member, should feel comfortable talking with the Pastor one-on-one regardless of the subject. I see no reason to bicker over the controversial subject of "evolution", or to use the current term, "Intelligent Design". If the Pastor thinks differently than I on a subject, we should be able to discuss that subject comfortably. The end result may be that we agree to disagree.

It should not matter if I am "conservative" and the pastor is "liberal". Church should be a safe place where a person can come and worship. If there is a controversy brewing in a Session meeting or other church activity, our Pastor should be able to step in and "defuse" quickly.

I would like our Pastor to make Whitefish home and participate in the local activities he/she find appealing.

In my view, a Pastor is a person with leadership abilities, compassionate, approachable, a counselor, has lots of common sense, and humble. This sounds like a tall order but I know a man who fits this description perfectly. Unfortunately he is not available as a Presbyterian Pastor.

FPC Whitefish needs a pastor who is a capital "P" Pastor. ( For recognizing this I recommend Eugene Peterson's new book "The Pastor.") We don't need a program director, nor just a *Good Preacher*, nor an entertainer, but a person who is in a deep relationship with God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. A person who has a deep prayer life, is continually gaining new insights from the Word, and encourages that in the congregation with everything he/she says and does. Also, a person who builds relationships with the congregation and wants to learn what their lives are like and their needs are. A Pastor knows that he/she and every congregation member is a sinner, but tries to love them with a Jesus-like love, anyway.

When our new pastor arrives, we must all vow that not a single October goes by that our church does not observe "Pastor Appreciation Month"! It's as marriage counselors advise--the more you act as if you love and appreciate your spouse (even if you don't feel very loving at the time) the more apt you are to find that you do love your spouse. The Kalispell Presbyterian Church signs up a family to show Glenn Burfeind appreciation every month in some way (such as dinners taken in or dining out) and has done so since he arrived.

# The Road

By Bob Paulus

Which road do we take? Shall it be straight ahead? Or maybe try the road to the left? But what if the correct one lies to the right? Decisions, decisions... What are we to do?

A few brave souls have volunteered to make that choice and are pondering with trembling trepidation the very real possibility that just maybe they royally messed up volunteering in the first place.

Which road? All are dim to the horizon with little revealed of the terrain ahead, let alone the chance of rain, snow, sun, or wind. In fact, there seems to be a mist of fog shrouding the view obscuring the lay of the land. Even the bravest conjure up haunting images of specters and scary apparitions lurking in that mist waiting to devour anyone foolish enough to pass the way of the road—any road.

What are we to do? Which road to take?

Enoch gazed into the half-light mist of fog. Uncertainty revealed itself reflected in his eyes. "Which one", he asked aloud. "Someone needs to commit."

Rafael was standing closest and replied, "Remember what the *wise ones* said. Keep to the faith."

"Yeah, those *wise ones* sure have a talent for brevity but say little of substance to aid us with our choice." said Enoch.

"Think about it Enoch, The words they gave us have power because they carry the strength of wisdom and truth. You must seek the inner way to understand."

Enoch said nothing. A dark foreboding mood had settled in his mind like a cloak of midnight enshrouding his spirit. He stood in quiet contemplation staring down that middle road, eyes shifting left, then right.

They were nine in all. Nine brave volunteers charged with the task of finding something so precious they dare not utter its name. The responsibility they shouldered possessed such a heavy load, they had mutually decided to equally share its weight.

The nine stood before the juncture of

three roads shrouded in fog. Any one of them might take them to the completion of their goal. But any of these tracks could also lead to disappointment, heartbreak, and loss, not only for themselves, but the many others who were counting on them. They were serious in their resolve and confident in their abilities. Until..... they looked down those roads. The ambiance of the air they breathed was as dark as sack-cloth.

The nine shuffled and murmured among themselves complaining how they had expected bright sunshine and scenic panoramas of richly hued landscape to embrace their travel. They expected to see clearly the navigation way-points as they merrily sojourned along a smooth surfaced track.

"Which road?" they asked.

Of course, it would be the passage that leads to the prize and accolades of back slapping comrades when they made their triumphant return.

But this vision was shattered by a brutal reality when they arrived at the juncture of not one, not two, but *three* choices of roads. The sunlight was shrouded with thick merciless fog obscuring the countryside's colors and features as far as the eye could see which was pathetically short at that juncture of choice.

A decision must be made they reasoned. Which track do we take? Wise ones had counseled to follow the *faith*. But faith cannot be seen. It eludes the senses. The titanic power of the mind can veil and distort the wisdom all knew they must collectively possess.

*Follow the faith.* The statement became a question. What is faith?

The nine pondered this query. John was the first to speak, "Hebrews states that faith is the assurance of things hoped for."

Rafael responded, "Yes, but... that is surely an attribute of faith but it doesn't tell the whole story. Faith is much more than that."

Enoch stirred, shifting his feet in the dust, "You know, I once heard that faith is

comparable to *light* in a way. I wonder if there is something in that?"

They stood and shuffled on the road, some kicking at stones that were sent scurrying through the dust. After a few minutes, a voice was heard, "Will you take a look at that?" Everyone turned to Joaquin who was staring past the juncture down one of the roads.

Eight more set of eyes darted to the spot Joaquin had noticed. "Is that a light?" someone asked.

"Sure looks like one," muttered another.

An unmistakable small pinpoint of white light had emerged that pierced the gloom of the thick heavy fog. As the nine gazed, the light grew broader and seemed to diffuse into the surrounding mist. It gently shimmered and contorted shaping itself into a recognizable image.

"A door!" shouted Enoch. "Do you see it? It looks like a door."

The nine gazed in wonderment. The shape of a door radiated through the fog with an essence that was neither brilliant nor dim. Rather it possessed a soft glow of luminance that seemed to comfort the eye and still the mind.

"What could it mean?" Joaquin asked. "Is this a sign?"

Enoch, whose somber aura of gloominess had suddenly vaporized, lifted his hand to still any chatter. "I think I might know what this means. This isn't a sign. It's an invitation.

"Light cannot mix with darkness. Whoever follows the light will live in the light. I sense that this light will guide us on our quest. We will follow it and... step through a door."

Joaquin asked, "And what lies beyond that door?"

Enoch hesitated, then replied, "I don't know.... I just don't know. But follow it I shall. Who is coming with?"

No one spoke. They all walked down that road.

## A note from the Editor:

It should be noted that any views or opinions expressed in this publication is not necessarily the views or opinions of the First Presbyterian Church USA.

My contact information follows:

Bob Paulus  
bob@fpcwhitefish.org

