

The Sweet Spirit

Olive Branch United Methodist Church

March, 2014



Just a Thought.

This article really got me to thinking. Is our church described here or have we started down the road to relevancy in our community and world.

The Church's Frightful Kodak Moment by Thom Schultz

We walked through the nearly empty, formerly flourishing space of the Kodak manufacturing plant near our home. The plant manager, a friend from church, sadly described how Kodak plants had been downsizing and closing ever since the advent of digital photography.

"We have a wish here," he said. "We just want to be the last one standing." Kodak has since abandoned most of its space on this campus. This week the company announced the latest job eliminations.

My friend from church is gone. And I wonder. Is the church the next to go the way of Kodak? I see some chilling parallels.

Kodak dominated the photographic scene for over 100 years. It commanded an 89 percent market share of photographic film sales in the United States. Almost everyone used the brand. And the company's advertising language of a "Kodak moment" became part of the common lexicon.

What happened since then has become a colossal story of failure and missed opportunities. A gigantic casualty in the wake of digital photography—a technology that Kodak invented.

That's right. Kodak engineer Steve Sasson invented the first digital camera in 1975. He later said, "But it was filmless photography, so management's reaction was, 'That's cute, but don't tell anyone about it.'" And the company entered into decades of agonizing decline, unable to perceive and respond to the advancing digital revolution. In 2012 this American icon filed for bankruptcy.

How could this happen? Where did the leaders of this once-proud organization go wrong? And how might the American church, which has also entered a time of decline, resemble this story?

SIGNS OF DEMISE

1. A misunderstanding of mission. Kodak's leaders thought they were in the film business—instead of the imaging business. Their clutching of the traditional methodology clouded their ability to think about the real objective and outcome of their work. The same is happening in churches that confuse their methodologies and legacies with the real mission. Many church leaders believe they're in the traditional preaching business, the teaching business, the Sunday morning formula business. Clinging to the ways these things have been done diverts the focus from the real mission of helping people today develop an authentic and growing relationship with the real Jesus.

2. Failure to read the times. Kodak's leaders didn't recognize the pace and character of change in the culture. They thought people would never part with hard prints. They derided the new technology. They assumed that people, even if they wandered off to try digital photography, would return to film-based photos for the perceived higher quality. People did not return. Similarly, church leaders who assume that the current church decline is just a cyclical blip, will be left to sweep out the empty factories of 20th Century religion.

3. Fear of loss. A central reason Kodak chose not to pursue digital photography in 1992 was the fear of cannibalizing their lucrative sales of film. Kodak had become a hostage of its own success, clinging to what worked in the past at the expense of embracing the future. The same tendency befalls churches. A pastor said his church will not make any changes to become more effective because someone will inevitably object and get upset. "We abdicate every time," he said. "We just can't lose any more members." That congregation is already dead. They just don't know it.

TURNING AROUND

The Kodak story didn't need to take such a dismal turn. And neither does the story of the American church. The times call for proactive steps for a brighter future, if we're willing to learn from others' mistakes. Some thoughts to consider:

1. Accept and understand reality. Even though some of the decline is slow, it's real. The American church is fading. Do not be misled by anecdotal glimmers of numerical growth in isolated examples. Examine the overall trends in the country. And look past the easy measures of butts in seats, and ask deeper questions about true spiritual vitality. And, resist the temptation to defend the status quo.

2. Don't just tweak. Revolutionize. Once digital photography began to take off, Kodak tried tweaking their old models. It was a case of too little too late. Many churches today are tweaking with cosmetic changes—in music, church names, and pastoral facial hair. A church leader said if his traditional church would just install screens, the people will come. They won't. It's too late for tweaking. It's time to re-examine everything we're doing and re-evaluate. Ask big questions. Is the old Sunday morning formula of half sing-a-long and half lecture what works anymore? Is that performance on Sunday morning really how we want to define the sum total of the church anyway?

3. Take some risks. Experiment. Act now. Pastors and church leaders are discouraged. As we brainstorm with them about changes they might try to enhance their ministries, some sink into paralysis. "People may not like the change," they say. "What if it doesn't work?" And we ask, "What are you afraid of?" It's time to have some faith—faith that God will walk with the faithful who are willing to step out and risk a little love on his behalf. Try something. Experiment. Let your people experiment. Be bold. Don't delay.

Kodak failed and squandered tremendous opportunities because its leaders chose to defend the status quo. We can learn from their mistakes. And we have an additional resource on our side—God. He's not giving up on his church. He's already moving into the future. We need to muster the courage to move with him. ED

Second Sunday Lunch

Second Sunday Lunch this month will be a Pancake Luncheon. The men will deliver bacon, sausage, and pancakes with the trimmings. Anyone wishing to contribute dessert is invited to do so. Come and join us for a time of fellowship as we all enjoy a pancake lunch. A love offering will be taken.

Lent

Lent is a solemn religious observance in the liturgical calendar of many Christian denominations that begins on Ash Wednesday and covers a period of approximately six weeks before Easter Day.

The traditional purpose of Lent is the preparation of the believer through prayer, penance, repentance of sins, almsgiving, atonement and self-denial. Its institutional purpose is heightened in the annual commemoration of Holy Week, marking the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, which recalls the tradition and events of the New Testament, climaxing on Jesus' crucifixion on Good Friday, which ultimately culminates in the joyful celebration on Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

During Lent, many of the faithful commit to fasting or giving up certain types of luxuries as a form of penitence. The Stations of the Cross, a devotional commemoration of Christ's carrying the Cross and of his execution, are often observed. Many Roman Catholic and some Protestant churches remove flowers from their altars, while crucifixes, religious statues, and other elaborate religious symbols are often veiled in violet fabrics in solemn observance of the event. Lent is traditionally described as lasting for forty days, in commemoration of the forty days which, according to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus spent fasting in the desert before the beginning of his public ministry, where he endured temptation by the Devil. Historically, the season of Lent lasts from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday. This duration has been maintained by most Western Christian denominations, including the Anglican Church, Lutheran Church, Methodist Church, and Western Rite Orthodox Church.

As we receive ashes on Ash Wednesday be aware of the words that are spoken to you: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." This is a time of repentance and soul searching. Be blessed!

Message from Bishop Cho

Bishop Cho has invited all of our Churches to join together in a prayer covenant. Every person is asked to commit to at least one hour each day and be in prayer. Let us join together and pray for each other, our church, and our sister church; Rock UMC, The United Methodist Church, and all of our churches and World Leaders. Let's make 2014 a year of prayer and recommitment to our Lord and Savior. Remember that a covenant is a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action. This covenant is between you and your God. Let us all join in this time of prayer.

Message from the Council Chair – Jane DiStefano

Another month has come and gone and I find myself looking forward to the Lenten Season. A time to look at oneself, seek direction and grow. And our church needs to follow this same path...look at where we are, how we are doing and what can we do to improve. Remember - don't let the past overwhelm the present.

As we begin to think about our church's direction, let's seek God's direction. Let's ask God to step into our church life, to guide us in the direction he has planned for us. We cannot do this alone. And if each and every one of us prays for God's guidance and blessings, great things can and will happen.

I have seen such great improvement in the spirit of the church in the last few months and it makes me want to be there more and more. It is such a privilege to have such a wonderful Church family; to see the caring and concern for each person in our family. I hope we can continue to grow in this love and spirit.

Please remember that our church will only be as good as those willing to work at making it the best it can be. Please come to council meetings and help us plan for the future. I look forward to seeing everyone on March 10th. Please feel free to contact me if you have any suggestions or questions. –

Jane

Church Pantry and Food Distribution

Please don't forget our Church pantry. We added another family this past month to the 10 families we serve on the second Tuesday and Fourth Friday of each month. Our brothers and sisters in the greater community are suffering and need help. We are blessed that Food Lion is willing to provide us with meats, vegetables, fruits, and baked goods but, it is up to us to fill out the dietary needs of the families we serve. Help keep our pantry stocked with your donations. I know you will open your hearts. Also, one of our biggest needs is meat. So if you are able, pick up an extra package of meat to help out one of our families. A big "thank you!" to those who take the time to help with the deliveries and each of you who donate to the Food Bank.

Also, Easter is coming fast and Food Lion is again giving coupons for money off on Easter Dinners. Please save your coupons and donate them to our Food Pantry so we can provide an Easter Dinner for our people in need of our help. And we will be looking for extra food for Easter Dinners. Thanks again for all you do.

Prayer Bear

Catherine Minks has introduced us to a new ministry. It entails donating a stuffed bear to our church so that we all hug and send on its way to someone who is in need of prayer. Several have been sent to members of our church who have had serious surgery or illnesses recently and we have been told the bears were with them during their stay in the hospital and when they came home. It is a small but powerful ministry. If you get a chance pick up a bear and let us hug him/her and send it on its way to help someone in need.

Coin Ministry

Catherine Minks reminds everybody to continue to save your change. She is hoping to gather it all and have it blessed on the 30th of March. The funds will go to our Outreach Committee to continue their work in reaching out to the least of our community. Catherine reports she has received about \$200 just from the box in the

narthex. So search out the spare change in your car, purse, coin bucket and even the cushions of your sofa. Every penny helps! Thanks!

Special Event on Prayer

Our District cluster group, Circle 9, hosted a Prayer Conference on February 9th at South Hill UMC. Our speaker was our own district Lay Leader, Johnnie Morris. The time was spent with a time of learning the different practices of prayer. Please spend time with the Word and learning the different practices of prayer. Some of these we might like to try in our church. At last report the attendance (43) at this event was the highest in the District. We had several people who attended and enjoyed the event.

Community Ash Wednesday Service

A service of imposition of Ashes and Holy Communion will be held at 7:00 pm on Wednesday, March 5 at Matthew's Chapel. This will be a community service and Rev. Jennifer will bring the message. Please plan on joining us for this special service as we begin the Lenten Season. Our choir will be singing with the other choirs for this time of worship. As in the past, mid-day worship services will be held during Holy Week and evening services on Maunday, Thursday, and Good Friday (the week of April 13-18). Please plan on joining us on this triumphant journey with our Lord.



World Day of Prayer

On Friday, March 7th, Rock UMC will be open from 12:00nn-7:00pm. Please plan on coming by anytime during those hours (come, pray, and go) and pray with Pastor Jennifer for our churches, our community, and our world. Let us also use this time to pray for the unchurched and for any personal prayer needs and concerns. Candles will be available to light in memory or honor of a loved one. If the weather permits, we will take a remembrance walk around the Rock Cemetery.

We are United Methodists?

Ever wonder why we; the people who call ourselves United Methodist, do the things we do? What sets us apart? Why is grace so important? What sacraments do we celebrate? What are apportionments? Who is this guy named, Wesley? Pastor Jennifer will be holding a UM 101 class at the parsonage during the month of March. Currently the schedule for classes is from 2pm-4pm on Friday, March 14, 21, and 28. Please let Pastor Jennifer know if you are interested in learning more about the United Methodist Church.

Easter Sunrise Service

Join us as Rev. Jennifer leads us in celebrating the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ with a sunrise service at the Pea Hill Creek bridge on Gasburg Rd. The site is just east of Sander's Store on the right going east. The service will begin at 7 am as we watch the sun come up over the lake knowing that we know that He is risen. Breakfast will be served immediately after the service in the fellowship hall. Bring the family, friends and neighbors to this joyous occasion.

Administrative Council Meeting

Our Administrative Council will meet on Monday, March 10th at 7:00 pm. All Chairpersons are reminded to bring reports of your meetings. This will allow us to only receive short reports so there is more time to discuss other issues.

At this meeting we will be discussing the Church calendar, a vision statement and the direction of our church.

If you have an idea of how we can make OBUMC better, bring your ideas to the council and let's talk about them. We can only be as good as our participation in the way we do things! Council meetings are for each member of our church to be heard.

United Methodist Women

The UMW is scheduling their annual Quiet Day Apart, which is a time for reflection, when the weather warms up. They will be attending a district prayer breakfast at Brian's in South Hill and look forward to all attending. Their next meeting will take place on the 12th of March in the Fellowship Hall. All women of the church are invited to take part in the missional activities of the UMW.

United Methodist Men

The United Methodist Men are continuing their mission work. They have three heaters available to loan to those in the community who have little or no heat. They are, now, registered with Brunswick County Social Services as a source of heat in the Gasburg area. If you know of a family or a person in need of heat this winter please call Ed DiStefano, 252-537-5705 or Ray Dyer, 252-308-0972 for assistance.

The Stew held on the 1st was a great success. 258 quarts were prepared and at this time 248 quarts have been sold. If you would like some stew please contact any member of the UMM. A great big "Thank you!" to all who helped that weekend. Our next meeting will be the 15th of March at 8:00AM. Breakfast will be cooked by John Mihoc and Jack Smith and we invite all men of the church to join us for a time of fellowship, breakfast, devotion. We welcome our sister church, Rock, as we gladly have them join us for breakfast and our meeting in February.

The United Methodist Men's "Widows, Wives and Ladies Luncheon was held on Sunday, February 16th at the Kennon House after services. All widows and single ladies of our Church were invited to attend. Transportation was provided to anyone needing a ride. There were 30 – 35 people who attended and had a great time of fellowship and food. Rev. Jennifer thought the food was excellent and asked if the men would do this every Sunday? Sorry Rev Jennifer, but the cost is prohibitive. All the ladies, widows, and wives had a great time. We hope that next year more will join us on this occasion to take the opportunity to show our grateful thanks for all they do, and did, for our church.

Sunday School

Sunday School is available each Sunday morning. The importance of Sunday School is that, though you may think hearing the word during the worship service will suffice for you, you really need to be in attendance at Sunday School to gather all the information that you can in an open discussion classroom. Jesus' word cannot be totally understood just by listening to a sermon. You have to interact with it and with other Christians to learn what He, as well as the other people of the Bible is saying to us. This is a life long study and you should take part. We are continuing a study on Christian history. Using "The Story of Christianity – Vol 1" by Justo Gonzalez, we are delving into what makes us the Christians through our history. We read and review one chapter each week and discuss what it is all about. It is very interesting as we move through the centuries and we hope you will join us. Sunday School begins at 10:00 AM. Do you know why we have all the attire worn by pastors? If you had been in Sunday School you would have found out!

Save Your Empty Ink Cartridges

A continuing mission project headed by Matte Bersch is to gather empty ink cartridges and send them away. The company that they are sent to then sends the church a check. Sooo, please save them and put them in the box in the fellowship hall. All funds go to continuing our outreach. Thank you Mattie!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Celebrating birthdays this month:

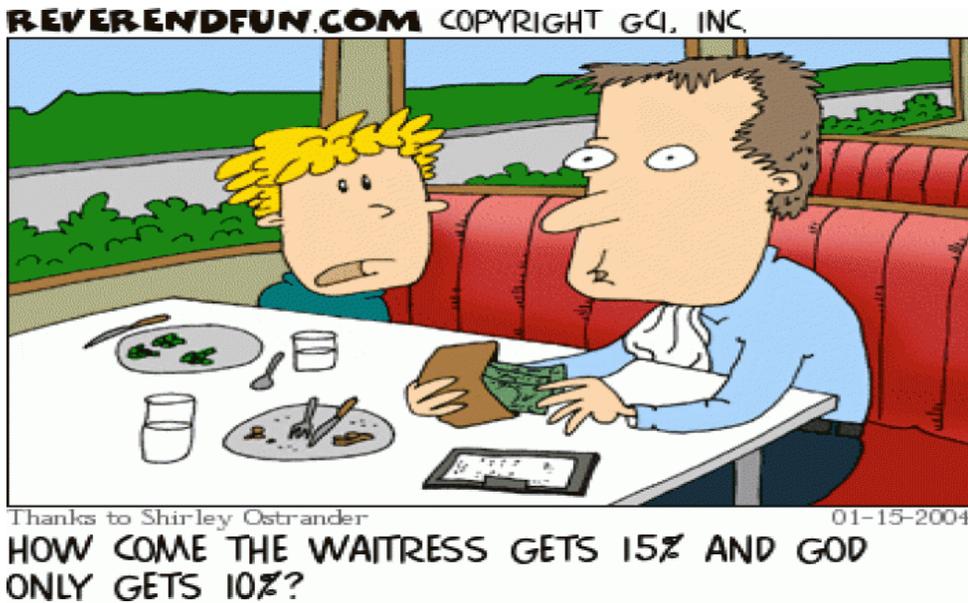
Jim Noland 5, Lisa DiStefano 6, Gail Rice 11, Leroy Drummond 14, Barbara Floyd 27
Ed DiStefano 28, Alex Roller 30

Anniversary's

Monty and Vickie Evans 24, B. J. and Pat Griggs 25

Choir Makes a Joyful Noise

And our choir does just that. We practice on Thursday's at 7:00 PM. We are 9 strong at this time and with the help of Shirley Everest we are learning to read music. Try that at our age!!! If you feel that you would like to make a joyful noise, please come join us. We are planning for the Lenten and Easter Season. It should be an exciting time for us and the church! Let us all come together to praise the Lord in song at our worship services.



This is our newsletter. It is meant to be a way to communicate what your church is doing and what all the organizations are doing both in the congregation and the community. I am sending this electronically via email and copies will be made available for those who need a printed copy.

There are many organizations within our church and I hope they would like to have their achievements, plans, and meetings made known to the entire church. It is my hope that they will ask one of their members to drop a short note as to what they doing each month. The line of communication in the church needs to be open and full of what we are doing at Olive Branch to make disciples in our area. If you would like to send us something, please bring it to church or send me an email (revedumc@yahoo.com) and we will see that it gets published. Please, let's keep our church informed on what we are doing. See you at church and God bless.

Ed DiStefano