

**“MOVING AHEAD”**

**PASTOR MIKE CORWIN**

**BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION**

**TITLE: MOVING AHEAD**

**TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 3:13**

**I – CELEBRATION:**

What a special day! The city of Bucyrus has been celebrating this year because it is 200 years since the founding of our fair city. We are celebrating this same year because it's been 200 years since a circuit rider named Jacob Hooper stopped here and preached a sermon under an Oak tree. That began the celebration.

We come together today because of that sermon. People heard it and formed churches and met in their homes. Over the next years those people and others decided they needed a more permanent place to meet and worship so they began building those churches. And that trend continued on and Methodists became an integral part of the Bucyrus community.

Pastor Becky gave you the history of our story and you'll all receive a book to tell you more.

**II – BUCYRUS UMC:**

Then eleven years ago the landscape for the Methodist Movement in Bucyrus changed. It became obvious that the city could no longer sustain four different congregations and all of them be vital. All four of those churches began meeting and ultimately three of them voted to merge into one church. They were all doing some form of ministry but how much more could they do together!

That's when a crazy pastor got a call and told he would be assigned to this new church. So I jumped on my horse (maybe my Toyota) and came in search of that Oak tree so I could preach the Gospel and continue the movement. Prayer teams were formed and meetings were held as we worked through all the red tape and jumped through the right hoops to be the new church. Through all of this “God's Love In Action” was born and we began working at the existing ministries, some of which were done away with while others were enhanced and built upon. New ones like our ministry with Liberia Africa were started.

As I look back at some of the whirlwind we have been through I wonder how we ever made it. How we survived and All the meetings, all the work, all the financial needs for two building projects, and I come

up with the same answer. First and foremost is that we did it all with God's Power. We consulted him all during the journey. The second part is that the people called Methodists saw what had been done for them to build their faith and they were faithful in their giving so we could do the ministry needed to continue the Methodist Story in Bucyrus, Ohio and make sure our faith is passed on to those who come after us.

### III – FACE FORWARD:

To do that we need to look ahead. We need to face forward. What has been done for us is monumental, but we now need to look to the future and be monuments of faith to all those who are coming after us. I look to the Apostle Paul for his advice:

Philippians 3:13

No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and **looking** forward to what lies **ahead**,

Paul was speaking about reaching the perfection that Jesus had called him to. The heavenly prize waiting for him at the end and he told his readers and us that they would not reach the goal by concentrating on what had already transpired, but on what was coming.

We have not reached the goal God has set before us here in Bucyrus and beyond. That goal is preaching the Good News and winning all the souls in Bucyrus and beyond for the Kingdom of God. We do that by figuring out new ways, better ways, efficient ways of spreading the Gospel and not resting on our laurels for the things we've already achieved.

There is more to be done and we must be about the job of doing it.

### IV – WILL WE LIVE?:

One of John Wesley's famous quotes is this:

"I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid, lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case, unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out."

The question before us this day and in the days ahead are not if we'll be the people called Methodists but if we'll be dead or alive. Will we continue to settle into our past and be happy with the status quo or will we remember the spirit that drove the early Methodist's and drive forward with a new and empowered vision and determination to tell everyone about the life saving work of Jesus Christ. Will we go forward as the resurrected church full of hope and promise for everyone, or will we be more like Zombies just trudging along on the same old path.

My intention is to lead you to life...not to death. Buckle in and hold on...we're not done yet!

AMEN