

***“How to Produce a Pastor”***  
(Cassandra Ann Todd Ordination Service)

4 p.m., June 19, 2011

by Gerald (Gerry) Jackson

**Jeremiah 1:4-9**

**The Call of Jeremiah**

<sup>4</sup> The word of the LORD came to me, saying,

<sup>5</sup> “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
before you were born I set you apart;  
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

<sup>6</sup> “Alas, Sovereign LORD,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am too young.”

<sup>7</sup> But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. <sup>8</sup> Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the LORD.

<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, “I have put my words in your mouth.

**Ephesians 4:1-13**

**Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ**

<sup>1</sup> As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. <sup>8</sup> This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high,  
he took many captives  
and gave gifts to his people.”

<sup>9</sup> (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) <sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

### **Let us Pray:**

Dear Lord, please use me today. Please give me the strength to share Your message to Your people. Help me, help me to overcome my humble limitations so that the words I speak be Your words. Help Your people to hear this message in the way You want them to hear it. May it be an individual message special from You to each one of them. Amen.

### **“How to Produce a Pastor” By Gerald (Gerry) Jackson June 2011**

When you first hear or see the title “how to produce a pastor,” and knowing it’s coming from Cassie’s dad, and further knowing a little about my sense of humor, your first thought might be “Gerry’s going to give a parent’s recipe for turning your kid into a preacher.” Not so. In fact, her mother and I are still quite amazed at how this how that happened. Proud yes, but amazed all the same.

What I really want to outline today is a bit of the journey Cassie has gone through, starting as a little girl, then becoming a Presbyterian and then on to becoming a Pastor. And in the process, identify & celebrate how Christ calls on and uses each one of us in the calling of a pastor to His Word.

To do so, I am going to first start with a bit of our family history. Cassie was baptized December 24, 1989, a few days after her fourth birthday. At the time we were between churches and as a family we hadn’t settled down to one church. So while we were home visiting family in Iowa for Christmas, Cassie was baptized at the same time as her cousin Matthew, at the church I grew up in, the First Presbyterian Church of Bellevue, Iowa, by Reverend Michael Roys. I’ll always remember how after her baptism at the font, Rev. Roys took her by the hand and walked her through the aisles of the entire church, talking to her, and reminding all in the church about the vows they were each taking on, promising to raise her in God’s house and teach her about Jesus.

It was a stretch but I was able to contact Reverend Roys last week and he has this share:

***“Yes, I was the pastor the Bellevue Church from late '85 till early '92. ...***

***It's always amazing to hear of how God calls forth grace in the lives of his children...and especially exciting to hear of someone taking this so significant step in faith / ministry...when I've had a tiny role in the beginning of that journey. If you would greet her for me and wish her God's blessings in her ministry, I would consider it a big favor.”***

Reverend Roys was the first of a series of Presbyterian Pastors that would have an impact on Cassie. One has to wonder, “Is it our pastors that influence our children and in that strange combination of life, they say or do something that tweaks one of those children that they too find they are to become a Pastor?”

For several years after Cassie’s baptism we spent a short time in a number of churches. I remember a Lutheran church near our house in Warren, where Cassis & Nicci (her older sister) would periodically attend Sunday School. We also spent time in several non-denominational churches. Then in 1992 we moved to the Davisburg area. That summer we began to “try out” nearby churches, starting with the Davisburg Methodist Church. The following Saturday, I discovered the Holly Presbyterian Church and remembered the church I grew up in, so I pulled into the parking lot and just happened to meet Rev. Jack Craft who invited me to church the next day. We attended, it felt like home and family so we stopped checking out churches and have been coming here ever since.

I also contacted Pastor Craft last week as well. Our dear friend Rev. Jack has this to share:

***“From the time you were ten or twelve years old and Betsy and I prayed for you when you rode your bike into a moving car, through your confirmation and your first sermon (Gordie Bradshaw emailed me about it and I read it online from the Walt Brown designed website), I have given thanks to God for his strong and loving work in your life.***

***Today I give thanks to God for the door he has opened for you to intern as the pastor of a small church. This is good work. May God bless you with a lifetime of it. Pay attention to God and call the people's attention to God, Cassie. Keep this focus through prayer, studying the scriptures and attending to the work of the Spirit in the lives of the people you're with at the moment.***

***An old pastor wrote the following to a young pastor a few hundred years back. They seem appropriate today.***

***So, my [daughter], throw yourself into this work for Christ. Pass on what you heard from me - the whole congregation saying Amen! - to reliable leaders who are competent to teach others. When the going gets rough, take it on the chin with the rest of us, the way Jesus did. A soldier on duty doesn't get caught up in making deals at the marketplace. He concentrates on carrying out orders. An athlete who refuses to play by the rules will never get anywhere. It's the diligent farmer who gets the produce. Think it over. God will make it all plain. (II Timothy 2:1-7, The Message)***

***I will be with you in prayer today as you make your promises and receive ordination. The Lord be with you, Cassie.***

***Grateful for the opportunity to be your colleague in ministry,***

***Jack Craft"***

Cassie was entering First grade at the time we moved here in the Holly area and that fall she and her sister began to regularly attend Sunday School here and she grew up she participated in the children's choir and vacation bible schools we used to have jointly with several of the other churches. Our son Ben grew older and soon he too was participating in all we were offering to educate and care for all of our children here at Holly Presbyterian Church.

As Cassie became one of the older children in the church, Cassie also participated in our Teens For Christ Group. So I question that perhaps it was also her Sunday School teachers and youth group leaders that contributed to helping her become a pastor? Here are the comments from one of her Sunday School teachers who was also one of her youth group leaders, Peggy Dryer:

***“We had a great group of kids in and around that age group! What great memories!***

***When I was teaching, I could tell if a student was there because ‘they had to be’ or if they were really getting into what was taught. Cassie always participated eagerly, challenging me, (whew! I had to work harder!), shared her insights and was not only learning the Word but experiencing it. She got It!***

***What a great blessing it was when ‘my kids’ really got It. Another seed planted.” – thank you Peggy***

And here are comments from another of her Sunday School teachers, who also happened to be a youth leader. And he eventually became our church’s liaison to Cassie while she was in Seminary, Randy Cook:

***“I remember Cassie as a young teen always soft spoken and a warm smile. As her Sunday school teacher and Teens For Christ leader I can remember her strong conviction about who she knew God to be.***

***I don’t know if Cassie remembers some of the conversations we had about theological issues, in which our opinions differed. Cassie’s arguments always made me stop and think.***

***I know now that God had chosen Cassie all along.” – thank you Randy.***

Cassie grew up in this church and then went on to Michigan State University to study Kinesiology, first thinking she was to become a sport trainer. However, during college she became more and more drawn to God. During that time she struggled with who she was and where she was being drawn and checked out different denominations. She even spent a summer working in Indiana as counselor at a non-denominational church camp. For the last several years

of college she participated in an on-campus ministry called His House and eventually lived there through her senior year. In the end I think she was surprised to discover she really liked being Presbyterian. It was also during her senior year that Herb Swanson, a former interim pastor of this church, hired her as an intern to Delta Presbyterian Church on the western side of Lansing, Michigan. Herb has this to share about Cassie:

***“While Cassie was at Delta, Cassie showed the congregation some of the potential she had even then for pastoral ministry. I've forgotten the details, but she organized and ran a week-long child care program at the church that involved some 20 church volunteers and a good number of kids. It was well-organized and run, and was one of the better things we did at Delta in my three years there. She worked well with the Mission Outreach Committee, which was her assigned committee, and collected a good deal of information on local churches and ministries that was helpful to me in "learning the turf" in W. Lansing.***

***Give her our greetings, peace, Herb”***

It was also during that year Cassie made a decision to pursue ministry and applied and was accepted at a number of the Presbyterian seminaries around the country. And as most of you know she attended and just last month graduated from Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia. While in seminary, she was certainly influenced by the various ministry professors there. She was also periodically counseled by our ministers during that time, Rev. Randy Cullen, and then Reverends Anne & Bill Robertson, the latter who are here with us today. And she was placed under the care of our Lake Huron Presbytery and the Presbytery's Committee on Preparation of Ministry, led by the Reverend Ken Hetzel, who is part of the ordination team here today and a number of the committee members are also here. As Cassie progressed through seminary, Ken became her direct liaison from our Presbytery and he and the committee certainly spent time evaluating, giving guidance and encouraging her to pursue becoming a solo pastor.

>>> **TRANSITION** >>>

So was it the unique combination of pastors, Sunday school teachers, church camp counselors, youth leaders, family and friends in Cassie's life that led her to becoming a Minister? I don't think so.

Friends, just like Peggy & Randy, I was also a youth leader in this church at one time. It was prior Cassie being in the youth group. As one of youth leaders I answered a call from our Presbytery and one summer I became one of our Presbytery's counselors at Triennium. For those of you not familiar, Triennium is a HUGE youth retreat, Huge. It is held at Purdue University once every three years, lasting about 5 days long. Some 6000 teenagers from all around the country (some even from other countries) come to Triennium. It is quite an event. I want to share with you a powerful experience that happened to me there.

The teenagers were put in smaller groups for discussion sections that happened periodically throughout the week. These smaller groups were made up of teens from different Presbyteries and I was selected as a counselor to lead one of these mixed discussion groups. After one of the discussion sections, one of the girls in my group held back to talk more with me. She was being moved by God but was really struggling with it and wanted my personal input. We had quite a long discussion and I was able to tell her a marvelous message that at the time I didn't know how such profound content was coming out of me, it was the perfect thing for that girl at that time and she was greatly comforted. As she walked away from me, I started feeling pride at being able to help her and all of a sudden I realized it wasn't me that said those perfect things to her. I started shaking because I realized it was Christ that had talked to that girl, not me. He knew the right things to share with her. He could read her heart and I was fortunate to be there so He could use me. I was shaking because I had heard Christ's voice and it came from within.

How to produce a Pastor? The simple fact is we don't. We don't produce pastors, Christ does and He does so using each and every one of us. He's done so through each of us whether we are a parent, a Preacher, a Sunday School teacher, perhaps a Youth Leader, even a family member or a friend.

Today we have some of Cassie's family and friends here. They come from many walks of life as well as represent many different beliefs. We have Episcopalians, Church of Christ, Lutherans, Disciples of Christ, Catholics and others here all worshiping together. We even have a couple of Presbyterians (including 6 or so professional preachers).

We are ALL called here ... not just Cassie, and we are all called in many different ways. No matter who we are or what our individual histories may have been, no matter what denomination we might be, how we believe or even if we believe, God uses each and every one of us; and Christ from within talks through each of us. If you think about it, today should confirm to you Christ is within you. Just like me a number of years ago, please recognize that and shudder in the pure joy of knowing Christ lives, and he lives within each of you. Think about those times when just like me, you have nurtured and talked to another and you were amazed at how that somehow you were able to do and say just the right thing. Perhaps it wasn't you ... I am going to suggest to you it was God and you have heard His Voice. Christ from within you, may it always be so.

<<<*FINALE*>>>

And the final part of the message today is for Cassie. Cassie, just as all through your life, Christ has talked to you through all of these people and more, please remember he still has some talking to do to you. Sure He is calling you to carry His Word to the good people of Williston, South Carolina, no doubt. But just as much as Christ is calling you, he is calling each of those folks in the Williston Presbyterian Church, as well as your new colleagues in Charleston Atlantic Presbytery, to let Him talk to you through them as well. Preach to them, care for them and very importantly listen to Christ through them. God bless you.

Amen

© Copyright 2011. All Rights Reserved.