

## **Power for Good / Annual Meeting Sunday 2024** (shared)

So, if you've looked ahead in your bulletin already, you'll see you're getting double-sermoned today – David and I will **BOTH** be speaking.

We figured that since there's only one service today instead of two, why not pack that *one* service with **two** sermons.

Before you all start running for the doors, have no fear – we're each keeping it short, I promise.

If you've been here on Easter and Christmas, you know that on those very special days, we do the same thing –

*each* of us shares a little message, because Christmas and Easter are days of such meaning and we both have things to say!

Well, truth is,

Annual Meeting Sunday is a day of great meaning for us, too.

**Not**, to be clear, on the same level:

the voting in of our budget is **not** as cosmically significant as the baby in the manger.

But for people like us in a Congregational tradition that goes back centuries,

it's a pretty big deal, this day when we honor that tradition.

It's a pretty big deal to gather as the one body of Christ, and listen to each other,

and decide together,

and remember what it means to be Church together.

To do Church together.

And what *does* it mean?

Well there's a phrase in our church covenant that I kinda love, that I think sums it up pretty well.

Last Sunday we all said it together.

It being a first Sunday of the month, we were welcoming in new members.

And as we always do, we stood together, all of us, and shared in what's called *the owning of the covenant* – saying the words of promise that bind us together as one church.

The last line of that promise is this:

“We will endeavor to make this church a power for good in the service of God and humanity.”

I love that.

We will be a power for good.

Serving God, serving each other.

We will be a power for good.

On June 29<sup>th</sup> of this year,

we will fill six coach buses with teenagers eager to go serve in the mountains of Appalachia.

Two hundred and thirty high schoolers are signed up, and I've got a wait list.

That's a lot of kids.

And even though all of them are active in our Thursday night youth group meetings,

to really get to know each one of them I need some quality time off Thursday nights.

So several years ago now, I started requiring kids to come and meet with me, in my office, just to talk.

To talk about what draws them to this service trip,

what it means to them to go.

And I gotta tell you, I love these meetings.

Three or four kids at a time, sprawled on the couch in my office, talk talk talking – I love it.

And when I ask them why they want to go to West Virginia and sleep on an air mattress and fix homes every day, what they say to me blows me away.

They say things like “I’m going because I love to make people feel loved.”

They say “the best I’ve ever felt in my whole life was last summer when I showed our homeowner her new roof.”

And one teen this week said this:

“I can’t wait to go. I just want to be part of something good.”

Part of something good.

A power for good.

A little while back, I was talking to one of the members of our refugee resettlement committee, one of our amazing volunteers who helps get the apartments ready for families arriving in their new home here.

And I thanked her for what she does.

And she said “why are you thanking me?”

I should thank *you*.

I should thank you for a church that gives me the chance to do good.”

A church that gives you the chance to do good.

A power for good.

Which is almost word for word what I heard from another one of you this week,

when I ran into you downtown.

You were one of the people in the church who in these last six weeks have delivered this church's love in myriad ways:

by bringing remembrances to those who were missing someone at Christmas,

and soup and scones to the homebound,

and flowers to the hospital –

there has been so much love delivered out of this church in these winter months.

And when I thanked *you*, you said the same thing:

*I love to be part of a church that does so much good, more good than anyone even realizes.*

A church that does more good than anyone even realizes.

A church that gives you the chance to do good.

A church that lets you be a part of something good.

A power for good.

This is what it means to be church in this place.

This is what it means to do church.

To choose to be a power for good.

To put our hands and our hearts to work ... in the service of God and humanity.

On this Annual Meeting Sunday,

we celebrate who we are together,

who it is YOU empower us to be.

*A power for good in the service of God and humanity.*

Bless you for all that you make possible here.  
Amen.