

## *86 Years and Counting*

Christ the Redeemer Church  
February 14, 2010  
Transformation Sunday/St. Valentine's Day

Luke 9:28-36  
Rev Gary L. Smith  
[www.christredeemerchurch.com](http://www.christredeemerchurch.com)

Herbert and Zelmyra Fisher in South Carolina are 104 and 102 years old respectively. They have been married 86 years to each other. They are in the Guinness Record book as the living couple with the longest marriage. If they make it 128 days past their May anniversary this year then they will be the longest married couple in recorded history.

Pam asked me if I thought they will make it. I said, "They are accepting twitter questions from around the country this month about their marriage so they probably will make it."

86 years is a long time to be married. 86 years is a long time to be anything. Andy Rooney said recently, "...a few minutes and suddenly you are 91."

We would love to freeze the good moments of love and laughter in our lives. Luke wrote that "8 days later they went up to the mountain." Numbers frame life. Peter wanted to stop time up on that mountain. Build a monument. Never leave the mountain. I would help build with him. But life is lived in the valley. Not on the mountain.

Life moves on with or without us. I departed Monday afternoon in a terrible rainstorm to drive to Fort Worth to attend a luncheon at TCU to honor Mike Young. I turned around twice in the rain to return home but ended up making it to Fort Worth. Storms force us to decide to continue or to retreat.

Mike had a heart transplant a year ago and now he is back in life, working at a church, preaching two services this morning and leading preaching seminars around Texas. Mike kept me up to midnight this past Monday, way past my bedtime. Mike tired me out and I did not call Pam. I called Pam early Tuesday morning. I said "Good morning."

She said, "I got a dog at the pound last night. I saved another dog at the dog pound."

I said, "Pam, I have only been gone *one night* and you already got a dog?"

Gone only one night and a dog was selected. We can not freeze time or life.

34 years and this is our fifth dog. I picked out three of them and all three of them did not work out so well. She picked the 4<sup>th</sup> one and Buddy was a saint. Amity gave her mom money for Christmas, from Buddy, with a note "go save another dog for me. (Signed) Buddy." As soon as Buddy's life was over, Amity said, "Buddy is now with Jenny."

Our dog priest Betty told Pam Monday after I left town, "Pam, you will never find another Buddy. He was perfect." Priestly advice. So Pam took her dog priest's advice and

darted over to the pound while I was gone. I was gone only one night. Pam and Daniel played me like a fiddle. Pam said that Daniel loves the dog. Daniel said that his mom loves the dog. Life rarely presents us with perfect options, perfect people, perfect mates, perfect jobs, or perfect friends. Life moves on with or without you.

Part Pomeranian, part Border Collie. 12 pounds. Red like a fox. Carla came up with the name Foxy Lady. Great, the church helped a lot! Pomeranians are known as the Queen's dog. I asked Pam "What does the dog **do** in life?" She said the research shows it is a "Queen's dog." Sounds ominous. It looks like a dog, at least. Not like a little rodent.

Mike told me that two things changed for the good while he was out of ministry 10 years waiting for a new heart. More technology and less coats and ties at clergy meetings.

He was one of five people recognized at the Brite Divinity School Alum Outstanding Ministry Luncheon on Tuesday for his continuous and outstanding Ministry in the Church over the past 30 years. He gave the shortest and best speech. He told a room full of ministers and church bureaucrats that the biggest regret was that he ended his ministerial career as a bureaucrat. That got a big laugh. He was always a heart man. He told us he had no idea why he was being recognized at the Awards luncheon and he never mentioned his new heart. He and Margaret just go on in life, weathering the storms.

Janice gave me a wonderful book entitled *First We Have Coffee*. It is written by a Norwegian woman who was the daughter of a Norwegian minister. Her father and mother ministered for 68 years in small churches in the United States and Canada. Both parents immigrated to America as children on ships without parents. They came to this land of opportunity...and they lived very hard lives serving others. But first they had coffee.

Margaret asked me Monday morning on the phone if I drank coffee. I told her of how a guy named Will in Alabama taught me to pour hot coffee into hot chocolate mix. Margaret had coffee and hot chocolate waiting for me when I arrived at their house.

34 years. 86 years. 10 lost years while waiting for a new heart. 5 dogs. A second heart. 5<sup>th</sup> year church anniversary coming up next month for our little church. Life continues.

My Valentine's Day present to Pam was Foxy Lady. I took full credit for it all.

We face another week. First we have Bread and drink from the Cup. Then we get to enjoy these homemade chocolate chip muffins, blueberry muffins, and pumpkin bread made by our own Sydney Roberts. All proceeds to the American Heart Association.

After I read about the couple being married 86 years, I told Shawn and Scott that now I have a new goal in life. I want to be married longer than they are and I want to do Scott's funeral when I am 110 then the next year do Shawn's funeral when I am 111. I will enjoy making fun of them at their funerals. Our kids will be in their 80's. Lots of laughter.

Shawn wrote back: Gary, You'll be lucky to make it to your next birthday if you keep popping off like that, pal. But if you do outlive me, I won't care if you're the one making a mockery of my funeral...as I'll be dead. Good talk. Shawn