

Planting 1,540 Christmas Trees in March

Christ the Redeemer Church
April 18, 2010
3rd Sunday of Easter

Acts 9:1-20
Rev Gary L. Smith
www.christredeemerchurch.com

This is the 3rd Sunday OF Easter. Not the 3rd Sunday after Easter. Dan told me he read a church sign this week that said, "Open Between Easter and Christmas." Yes, that takes a minute to sink in. He is Risen. He is Risen Indeed!

Saul was down in life. On the road, unable to see or to talk.

Most of us have some point in our lives at some age where life blinds us, knocks us down, and we can not even utter a sound. Some illness. Some crisis. Some family situation. Some job loss. Some transition in life. Unable to move, see, or talk. Paralyzed.

I was speechless when I came home from being away on an Air Force temporary duty assignment and I came home to Amity and Pam and...a new cat. Lt. Scott Anderson had given my wife and daughter a new cat while I was away from home serving my country.

Scott was always giving away cats and dogs because his wife Trudy was always taking in stray cats and dogs. She would bring in cats and dogs off the street, pregnant at that, and Scott would then be fully occupied getting rid of the multiplying animals.

I was speechless at the new cat. That cat, named Jenny, lived 20 years. A world record for a cat, as you know. Every time Pam and I would get an assignment, I would spend money to FLY that cat BACK to Scott wherever he lived. Then we would arrive to our new country or state and Amity would cry over missing her cat so I would spend MORE money flying that cat on a plane to us again. If I had all the money that Jenny and Scott cost me in airfare then I would be fully retired and on the senior golf tour now instead of exhausting myself while working away in a little church in Texas.

In 2002, Amity was at Auburn and she was about to be evicted from her student apartment. They found out she was hiding a cat in her apartment. I had been the one to suggest to her to hide Jenny in her place while at Auburn. She was in tears...she did not want to lose Jenny. We lived in Holland so we could not help.

I suggested she fly Jenny up to Washington D.C. ...to Scott's house. I called and Trudy answered the phone. I asked if Scott was home. She said he was TDY on a trip. I said, "Perfect. Jenny is coming home again." She said, "Great." From Holland, I orchestrated flying Jenny from Auburn to D.C. Jenny was waiting for Scott when he arrived home.

In 2003, I was surprised when Scott, who never travels on personal trips, told me he was driving with his family from D.C. to San Marcos to attend my Retirement and Installation Ceremony here in town. Scott did show up...carrying Jenny in a cage. He was beaming.

He drove all that way to hand-deliver Jenny to me.

Scott called me up a couple of years ago. Scott never called me after sneakily giving us Jenny. I always called him to give him the flight arrival times for Jenny. Anyway, I knew something was up when Scott called me. He was up for General in the Air Force. I congratulated him. He had been promoted 10 years early to Lt. Col and to Col (not really 10 years but two years early as a Logistics guy which is unusual) so making General was very possible.

He said he was going to retire instead of accepting a bid for General and he asked me if I had any advice. I told him, "Have a very BIG project in life or otherwise you will get bored and have regrets for retiring early. With your excellent health and energy and age, have a big project. I do funerals for guys who died within 6 months of retiring from long military careers...they miss it too much and are bored to death." He said, "Trudy and I are buying a 47 acre farm and we are going to convert it into a Christmas tree farm. Plant 9,000 trees over the six years, 1500 trees a year. Barns, tractor, animals...the whole works." His degree was in Forestry. This was a dream come true for him. Scott said he had no idea what they would do with all the barns on the farm. Trudy, in true fashion, said, "Don't worry. I will fill them with animals."

I told him that fits into the category of a BIG project.

They have been working hard on the farm. Then a few months ago Amity called me early in the morning, in tears. She told me Scott had cancer. She and Nicole have been best friends for 24 years. Scott, at age 55 or so, now came down with cancer. Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma cancer. The chemo treatments so drained his energy that he had to take a leave of absence from his government contracting work and rest at home, unable to do much of his farm work. Trees were needing to be planted last month and lime needed to be spread.

Scott is a great guy. His only flaw was that Jenny the cat trick.

On a Saturday last month, 50 staff members and their family and friends showed up unexpectedly to the farm...to work. Scott's thank-you letter to them reads:

Dear Booz Allen Family,

Trudy and I would like to thank all of you for helping us plant Christmas trees and perform other work on our farm this weekend. We had approximately 50 staff, to include their family and friends, working from 8:00 am to 5:15 pm. What a terrific turnout and what tremendous results:

* You planted 1,540 seedlings (232 Scotch Pine, 152 Blue Spruce, 540 Concolor Fir, 540 Canaan Fir, 30 Serbian Spruce, and 46 White Pine)

(comment from me – is that not a PERFECT Thank you letter from a Logistics and Forestry Guy????????? Every tree and every variety counted and listed! So Scott!).

- * You hauled lime and spread it on 7,930 trees (a sand-like material to raise the soil pH around the trees).
- * You hauled mulch and spread it around 2,662 trees
- * You picked up heavy brush along three quarters of a mile of fence line
- * You cleaned and caulked nail holes on a large workshop roof

In addition, you brought water, cookies, sodas, ice, and other yummy refreshments to go with our delicious pizza generously donated by other members of our Booz Allen family who wished to remain anonymous. We also had a donation for an additional Auger to help move the process along a bit more quickly. Thank so much to those who made those donations!!

Above all, you provided smiles, a warm compassionate heart and a caring attitude that Trudy and I will never forget! Signed, Scott

God's work like this is going on all around us every day in our lives. When I first met Scott as a Lt in the Air Force, he was working on the day after Thanksgiving at Carswell AFB...working so his enlisted troops could be home with their families over Thanksgiving. He put my dad the truck driver up into the cockpit of a B-52. He showed up to chapel a few months later and told me him and his wife Trudy and their daughter Nicole would be in chapel every Sunday from then on, sitting in the front row.

But he told me privately he did not really believe all of this church stuff but he did believe that it was important that his daughter Nicole be raised in church and be exposed to the teachings and the values of the Church. They never missed a Sunday. Trudy began to bake homemade pastries for the entire chapel and we began to grow exponentially...in several ways!

Scott later decided to become a Serving member of the Church, has served as Deacon and Elder in the Presbyterian Church around the country, and is a great asset to the Kingdom of God.

My Golfing in the Fog sermon last November was my prayer for his new chapter of life facing cancer...the fog of Life.

Scott and I have talked about how right his decision to retire and buy the farm was in his life. He can face this challenge from the vantage point of being on the farm, having a community of work friends and church friends surrounding him and helping him. That IS God's work – to help others.

God, thank you for Scott, Trudy, Nicole, Megan, and Kyle. Yes, I even thank you for Jenny, long since united with you in Heaven. And thank you for these 50 people who came and planted trees and spread lime to assist Scott right now when he needs help. Amen.

Offering Prayer/Closing Prayer
Glynn Cooper, *long-time Texas Tech student and eventual grad*
Christ the Redeemer Church
April 18, 2010

First, these are massive shoes to fill. As I stand here on a temporary basis, Curtis Parkerson was always the Closer. I feel like the guy that came in after Tom Landry, first and best coach of the Dallas Cowboys....no matter what the second guy did, it wasn't Tom, so it was never quite as good.

(Prayer) Every church has its own way to come to God...
I guess that is why this church exists
It has its own way...that is not to say
"Its own way to come to you" contradicts the way
Anyone else come to Jesus or they are wrong in
Their approach to God...We just have our own way
To come together, to celebrate your Son's Life and
His sacrifice.
We don't come here to judge others on what they
Do or don't do...We come here to give a little rest for our
souls. To know someone else is in charge, and that
there is a plan...even though that plan has a
dented fender or a few twists and turns in
it...we come to hear your Word and to relate
that Word to our lives in today's fast and furious
world.
To offer not only monetary gifts, but more
Importantly, our selves. To be a small part of your
Plan.
I have never been in a church that the people in the
Pews were so involved in each and every service.
In churches past, "The Plate" was brought from the
Altar and we gave from our seats...in this
Church, we come to the altar and with our gifts.
In other churches, the children were off in
Another wing and not part of the service...in this
Church, the children are the first ones to come to
Your altar to receive communion...the wine and the bread
Are not delivered to us in a sterilized
Service...we come as an individual to you to
Receive communion and all are invited no matter
Their Faith.
I think Church is about coming to You, with
Open arms, open eyes, and an open heart...thank you for
Your gifts and please receive ours. Amen.

