

Closing Remarks
175th Anniversary Banquet
Tenth Presbyterian Church
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Senior Minister

I trust that tonight you were all as deeply blessed as I was to watch the film, *This People, This Place*. Of all the wonderful things that were said in the film, the one that was most compelling to me was what Sinclair Ferguson said about the faithfulness of God. He said that we show our faith in the faithfulness of God, not so much by praising him for what he has done for us in the past, but even more by what we trust him to do for us in the present and in the future. If we really believe that God is faithful, then we will attempt to do even greater things for him in the days to come, trusting that he will be faithful to use even us to gain glory for Himself.

Tonight I dream about all of the things that we have not done, but that we may yet do by the grace of our faithful God. What do you dream about? I dream about reaching the whole City of Philadelphia with the gospel. I dream about having even more small group Bible studies scattered throughout the city. As I lament the condition of many of the old churches in Center City, now fallen on hard spiritual times, I dream about being part of a growing network of thriving new churches. What is needed is nothing less than the re-evangelization of our city. This work has already begun. We praise God for the church planting work he has enabled us to do in recent years, in partnership with other churches in our Presbytery. Already we have growing churches in the Russian-Jewish community, in the predominantly African-American community of Overbrook, in the Art Museum area, and in the Chinese immigrant community. And now we are praying and preparing for the next church that God will enable us to plant. With the launch of a new city-only Presbytery in 2006, I dream about carrying this work forward in the coming decades.

I also dream about all of the work that is still to be done overseas. Year after year we continue to send out new missionaries, commissioning them to a career of full-time Christian service. It is one of my fervent prayers that we will continue to send out career missionaries each year until Jesus comes again. And it is my prayer that we will send more and more of our own children—who grew up at Tenth Church—to go around the world with the Gospel. I pray that God will use us to meet some of the crying needs of our lost world, such as the suffering caused by war and the global AIDS epidemic. I have a burden for the lost orphans of the world who have not yet come into the embrace of our Heavenly Father. I praise God for the work that we are doing with orphanages in Liberia and Colombia. But I dream about doing even more in coming years. I also praise God for our growing outreach to the Muslim world, including a thriving partnership with the Turkish World Church. And I praise God for the seminaries we support in Colombia, France, Turkey, Vietnam, Japan, and China. What more will God give us to do in years to come?

Then there are all the opportunities for ministry that we have right here in Center City. I dream about the families that are being reached through the Angel Tree tutoring program becoming incorporated into the life of our church. I dream about providing a church family for men and women released from prison and seeking to live in the Body of Christ. I pray that God will allow us to resume the ministry of faith@work and establish a thriving

ministry of evangelism and discipleship in Philadelphia's business community. I pray for a growing movement of artists to experience the gospel in the context of a community that is committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I dream about having a full-time director of women's ministry, and of one day having a Bible-based Christian counseling center right in Center City. I dream that one day God will provide a fully adequate facility for City Center Academy. And as I think about all this new ministry, I pray that our own resources for ministry will grow, that God will provide the physical property we need to have a solid base for ministry to our community—including, I pray, the lawyer's building immediately next door to the church.

I also pray for the multiplication of our ministry. In past years we have had many opportunities to send people out for ministry, but I pray that we would be able to do this in a more intentional and even more effective way. Our pastoral staff has brainstormed about growing a residential internship program that would give young people—both men and women—a first-hand opportunity to participate in Christian ministry before, during, or after college. I dream about being able to offer a full one-year pastoral internship for seminary graduates who are ready to take the final step in their preparation for ministry. I pray that we would be able to send out gifted young preachers to serve in other churches, and gifted young musicians to help lead worship for other congregations. And while I am on the subject of music, I also continue to hope that one day God will provide our church with a real pipe organ.

Then I dream about the powerful work of God's Spirit in our congregation. I pray for the kind of revival that Rev. Alexander talked about in the film: a real outpouring of the Holy Spirit that would lead to a dynamic experience of repentance for all our sins as a church, and that would lead to radical new obedience as we learn anew how to live for Christ and His Gospel.

And I dream about being a part of all of that. I don't know if I have ever said this before—maybe not even to my wife, and certainly not in public to the congregation—but my secret ambition is that God would allow me to be present for our 200th anniversary as a church. Where will you be in 25 years? It is a question worth asking, is it not? Will you still be worshipping at Tenth Church, and able to participate in another celebration like this one? Linda Boice has done the math and thinks that she just might be able to make it! But of course the reality is that most of us will not be here. Indeed, some of us will have gone on to our eternal reward. What spiritual legacy will we leave for those who come after us?

Our prayer—our dream—is that others will be able to build upon the foundation that God has already laid, and that they will be able to do even more for our city and our world in His name. For now, all that we can do is to continue to do everything we can to advance the gospel among this people, in this place, and to praise God for His great faithfulness. Let's do that now as we close by singing our anniversary hymn: "Faithful to All Generations."