

Kim's Kolumn – January 22, 2019

One of the trends on Facebook lately has been posting a picture of yourself from 10 years ago along with a current one. At chapel last week, the preacher encouraged us to think about where we were 10 years ago.

Ten years ago was a pivotal time for me. My brother was dead. I was dealing with grief and unresolved issues. My parents and I were forging our new ways to be a family. That Easter I had a sense of needing to be closer to them. I hadn't asked for a move, so I lifted that up in prayer.

Ten years ago, I was in China. My friend, Heather was serving as a missionary. As she had shared her stories of healing and grace, she also invited me to visit. In her words, I also heard God's invitation. So I went to China for three life-changing weeks. More than the uniqueness of the culture, I experienced the power of Chinese Christians. Their willingness to pray and worship under the scrutiny of their government was powerful. They witnessed anywhere they had a chance. I worshipped with and was prayed for by Heather's friends. In the faith of those people, my faith was refocused. I realized how much energy and time American Christians waste on nonessentials. We who have the freedom to share the love of Jesus aren't doing a very good job. I began to pray differently for the congregation I served, the conference in which I serve, and my denomination. In the midst of rapid change, those things, which did not honor God, needed to pass away.

In the midst of these transitions, I heard my original call to ministry more clearly. I realized it included a call to help churches heal and be healthy. I started thinking seriously about a doctorate. I read voraciously in many areas as I sought answers to church dynamics.

Ten years ago, while I was in China, the cabinet asked me to move to Christ UMC. I knew this was God being ahead of my own sense that I needed to be near my parents. It also began a path that threw my plans up into the air.

Ten years ago, there were many things I did not know. I did not know that grief takes much longer and is more inconvenient than I'd ever guessed. Ten years ago, I wasn't able to see my father's illness and death. Ten years ago, I had no idea how powerful the grace of God can move in a congregation with so little help from me. Ten years ago, I was given the opportunity to be in a congregation and develop long-term relationships. I learned and grew in ways I had not expected.

Ten years ago, many things God had planned were coming into being even though I only had a small glimpse at the time. So, I stand at this moment with thoughts and plans. I continue to seek the will and wisdom of God while being more aware than ever of my limitations. What's ahead? God knows. God really does know and is in control.