

## The Road Less Traveled – February 9, 2018

The other day, I took a drive through the newest part of our neighborhood just to check out the progress. I ended up on a cul-de-sac that backed up to an open space of woods and a little creek that runs through the property. My daughter had told me about a new trail she found when she was walking our beagle, Chloe, so I stopped the car to see if I could locate the new path.

As I was walking along the edge of the street, a man approached on a four-wheeler. He drove right up to me and asked me what I was doing there. I was a little taken aback, but I explained that I lived in another part of the neighborhood and was just looking for a trail that my daughter had found. His face brightened, and he explained that he was the landscape architect who was creating the trails through the open area. I thanked him for his work and told him that, as a resident of the neighborhood, I appreciated the trails that provide a quiet taste of nature in the middle of town. I turned to get back in my car, but I never got there.

Instead, the man jumped off the four-wheeler and took me by the elbow and began pointing out where the trail would eventually go, where he was going to build a footbridge across the creek, how many miles of trail the project eventually would entail, and so on. He guided me to the other side of the street and hopped over the curb, beckoning me to follow him down a steep grade so he could show me the trail. So I followed, in my slacks and dress shoes, as we climbed down and began following the rough trail he had carved through the woods. He showed me how he has constructed the trail around all of the trees so nothing had to be cut down, and he stopped several times to have me marvel at how quiet it was. I couldn't even hear the cars on FM 1187, only a couple of hundred yards away.

He walked the trails with me for probably 20 minutes, and by the time we were finished, my shoes were filthy. But I really didn't care. This guy was so excited about the work he was doing, so pumped about his project, it was contagious. What I wanted more than anything was to go home, change clothes and go for a hike.

That's the power of sharing your story. I talk about that a lot in relation to evangelism. That evangelism isn't first and foremost about winning souls for Christ, but about creating a space for God to work in the hearts and lives of those who are seeking. When we tell our story, we aren't breaking out the Bible and sharing key verses, we are talking about how our journeys have been changed, how God is working in our lives. When we invite people to church, it isn't about checking off a box that says, "I did that," it's about sharing how Aledo UMC is cultivating and encouraging our daily walk with Jesus.

When you tell people you are a part of the Aledo UMC family, what do you tell them? Do you tell them about our service times, the different worship styles, Children's Ministry, Student Ministry, Sunday school? Or do you tell them about how excited you are to be a part of life-changing ministry? Do you tell them that we have a Wednesday night dinner and

programming, or do you talk about how cool it is when old and young come together for an impromptu birthday party, creating space for different generations to share their stories? Do you tell them that we build a wheelchair ramp every month, or what it feels like to liberate someone from the prison of their own home in the name of Jesus Christ?

The point is, excitement is contagious. And sharing that excitement is how we grow our church. So throw away the old manual on evangelism and simply tell your story. Tell our story. Tell it at work. Tell it at school. Share pictures on Facebook or Instagram. Check in on social media when you arrive. Because something exciting is happening at Aledo UMC. Can you feel it? I certainly can, and others have told me the same thing. Something exciting is happening. Our vision is beginning to take hold and affect the very culture of our church. That's our story. It's ours. And if we don't tell it, who will?

See you Sunday.