



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

I speak to you today as a sinner to sinners, as the beloved of God to God's beloved, as one called to bear witness to those called to bear witness. Amen.

As many of you know, this is Founder's Day, as I said at the beginning of the service. This is the one time a year when we celebrate the founding of this parish 96 years ago. And it's something that is incredibly important for us to do because Christ Church Cranbrook was started with an incredible gesture of generosity and vision and hope and faith and love that believed that we would be a parish as much as we are today. That we would be a parish that welcomes all, that loves all, and invites all to be transformed. And so it's important for us to thank our patrons of that day, George and Ellen Booth, and the friends and family of the Booths. To thank and think about the first rector, Samuel S. Marquis, who was a remarkable man, as I'll say a little bit more today. It's appropriate for us to give thanks for these founders.

However, there is something that we need to attend as closely to as we do to that first founding, and that is that whenever you or I do a work of the Spirit, we are founders of Christ Church Cranbrook. This church is founded every day through people like you and me. No matter how much one generation learns from another, says Søren Kierkegaard at the end of his brilliant book, *Fear and Trembling*. No matter how much one generation learns from another and benefits from another, in every generation, we begin afresh. And that is with passion. That is, Kierkegaard writes, the human element, which of course is also the divine element. Without that passion, that institution does not continue to be in the world around it. It does not continue to do its mission. It does not persist its founders.

So on this day in which we give thanks for Christ Church, Cranbrook, we give thanks not only for the first founders. We give thanks for all the founders that have come since who have by their lives and their love and their commitment to God in this church, have made it what it is. Founder's Day is for you and me because whenever we step into the Spirit, whenever we rely upon the power of God, we become founders. That is the teaching in all of our readings today. In Numbers, Moses is following the divine instruction. They're meeting at the tent outside the camp of the Israelites. And two people didn't follow the instructions, but they somehow get blessed with the Spirit and they start to prophesy in the camp. And people are alarmed. This is not planned. And Moses said, would everyone

prophesy in Israel, would God's spirit be upon everyone in Israel, we would be powerful beyond measure.

And Founder's Day celebrates that resting spirit, that *ruach* in all of us. In our reading from James, there is that incredible moment in which we are reminded that we can pray to God for healing. For those of us who have been struck or afflicted, for those of us encountering an unexpected illness, we have been given the power of prayer for healing. And we are reminded that these prayers are powerful. Elijah prayed and God heard, and God hears us. James is placing the people of God in the same place as He's placing the great prophet Elijah. Think of it.

And in today's gospel in which Jesus spits a bit of truth that is jarring about cutting off your hands and your feet and your eyes, that is rhetoric because Jesus has been triggered, probably, by the disciples because they were going to scold someone who is doing a deed of power in Jesus' name. Jesus, stepping into that same stream that Moses spoke out of, says to the disciples that whoever is not against us is for us, and whoever does the deed of power in my name is doing the will of Him who sent me. That is the meaning of what it means to be a church. We do not hang millstones around people who come here looking to be part of us. We do not hurt the little ones that come to us seeking God's grace. We do not hinder anybody who wants to be part of the deed of power that we do every day with the spirit. That is what it means to be a Christian: to recognize that power, to lean into it, to let that spirit flow through us. That is what it means to be founders.

I have two pictures before you today that I want you to think about and enter into and see what I'm trying to say when I say that we are all founders of the church. The first is on your bulletin cover and it's of this incredible moment that happened in our past. It was a ministry that existed for about three years, and that ministry was known as Awake. It came as a response to racial inequality and economic disparity in Detroit after the Detroit riots or rebellion, or whatever you want to call the uprising in 1967. The people of Christ Church Cranbrook, who were teachers, decided to reach out to a public school in Detroit, to a public school in Pontiac, and to the local school here at Cranbrook. And they started, in Detroit, the first desegregated school in Detroit.

Until that point, until the early 1970s, schools were segregated in Detroit by race, and they decided that God was calling them to a new way of being. They decided that they would use their power as educators and they would start a summer school that would provide real credit, that children can come to and learn side by side and do things together, and share secrets, as we see on that beautiful picture, and engage and study together and go and swim at Jonah, the great outdoor pool in Cranbrook.

All of these things they did. And they weren't entirely prepared. They hadn't done all the things they needed to do to enter into this deep and serious work of integration. The theme song for their entire program was from The King and I, "Getting to know you, getting to know all about you," which sounds like a great thing until you realize what The King and I is about. And let's just say that choice fills me with questions. No, God was not finished with them. They had things to learn about working with people who are different from them, and yet they did it. They did it. By the grace of God, they did it. And they made an enormous difference. They presented to the world around them a living parable of what it might be if people from different races could be educated together. We did that.

It lasted for three years because hopefully things got a bit better, and history tells us that they have. But this is a message to us in all that we do, when we engage in these actions, these beautiful parables of grace – that is the word I would use to describe our outreach work. When we do that, something powerful happens. God works through us. We become the founders of Christ Church Cranbrook. And it is something that fills me with awe when I think about all of these founding moments that have happened here and in the work we've done.

In 2021, when we were faced with the pandemic and we were given a vaccine that worked, we held a vaccine clinic in here. We recruited 100 healthcare workers from the parish. We worked directly with Rite Aid Pharmacy and we administered 2,500 vaccines to people. And I'll never forget one of our volunteers from that time, Nancy Torgeson, who is the sweetest person on Earth with the sweetest smile on Earth, turned to me, speaking about the pandemic, she says, and now we fight back. We did that. We came together, we made it possible for people to avoid death. We made it possible for people to travel to family across the world. We made it possible for people to begin to reduce the rate of infection. We did that by the Spirit of God.

In the midst of the pandemic, in the early days in 2020 before any government help had materialized and people were facing incredible unemployment and rent that they couldn't pay, we worked with Forgotten Harvest and we provided all of the cost of feeding the people of Pontiac for a week with Forgotten Harvest. We did that. And we took care of about 15,000 people who needed some staples to get them through the week.

This church has founding moments. They fill me with awe. There are more than I can count. It doesn't matter if they only lasted for a year or two. It doesn't matter how they fared, it doesn't matter their success. Whenever you and I as a congregation step forward into that decision and lean upon God and are filled with the spirit and do something, God is with us and we are founders of Christ Church Cranbrook.

The second picture I want to share with you today that brings us back to the very beginning is something that I think should be celebrated a little bit more. Not just because it's about the first rector, but it's also about the kind of endeavor that happened when this church was built. Samuel Marquis was a brilliant priest. He had been known for his excellence in construction, and so he led the construction efforts of the Cathedral of St. Paul in Detroit. And while he was doing that, Henry Ford, his parishioner, decided he liked the way he was doing things and hired him to be the head of the Department of Sociology at Ford Motor Company.

And so from 1915 until 1922 or so, Marquis was the head of what we would call human relations at Ford. And Henry Ford wanted him to somehow bring what he called applied Christianity to his company. And for Marquis, that meant not just making sure that the workers showed up on time and that their families were well cared for, but that they were given an equitable wage. The \$5-a-day job was important. Also, their wellbeing became the interest of the company.

And when Ford decided to found his factory in River Rouge, he decided to limit Marquis' reach as the director of sociology. And Marquis went and protested to Ford and said, you can't forget these commitments you made. And Ford did something that it has done ever since. He didn't fire him. He just put him on the floor of a factory where nothing happened and he gave him no administrative support. And he had an office in the way back, and I don't even think he had a phone, but that was where he sat for a couple of months until he resigned out of frustration.

Marquis wrote one of the definitive biographies of Henry Ford. It was published in 1923, and Ford was so threatened by it that he tried to buy up every available copy so no one could read it. And in it, Marquis wrote that Henry Ford was one of the most visionary leaders he had ever worked with. Marquis even went with Ford in 1915 on the peace mission that Ford went to try to resolve then World War I. But, Marquis wrote, the problem with Henry Ford is though he is excellent at building a company, the parts of the machine of the self do not fit together. Henry Ford could not, for the life of him, build the engine of himself. And that was his great failing as a person.

Marquis, after publishing the book, was leading a small church, and George Booth went to him and invited him to be the founding rector of Christ Church Cranbrook. Booth said in a beautiful way that he needed Marquis' vision and expertise in construction. This church, although it is in the genre of a medieval cathedral, was a modern building. It was the second great construction project after Cranbrook House. It was an extraordinary achievement that Marquis led. And one of the reasons why Marquis, having been burned once, was able to begin again, is because he trusted George Booth. He wrote in an interview that was done in 1940, he said that Booth was a person with whom I can disagree and still live in harmony. And so they built something together.

And the picture that you have before you is at the last page of the bulletin. It should be up for you now at home. It's of Marquis breaking ground. Now this is a fascinating picture to me. It was done July 5, 1925 and what Booth did, instead of taking the usual privilege of being the founder where you dig in the ground, he gave the shovel to Marquis. Marquis takes a scoop of earth, and you see him there crouched over, looking back at Booth and smiling.

It was in that kind of oscillation of gift giving between them, and that reliance upon God and that incredible power of the spirit that they built this church. This church was built from people who gave themselves to God and who trusted the Spirit. Those were our founders, and those are the people that we celebrate today. Not only at the first moment, but in every moment where you and I rely on God and the Holy Spirit, where you and I take an incredible risk and move forward in faith. When you and I create a church, much like Marquis felt he had built, when in 1936 he retired and wrote to the vestry the following:

Christ Church is an Episcopal church but it has been my aim from the day its services were started to make it a community church with doors open to all interested in religious worship and work, and willing to place such above divisive denominational forms and doctrines.

A church open to all. A community church – that was Marquis' vision. And I bring this photo up before you today because when you look at it, you see that there's been a bit of a trick. He's looking and smiling at Booth, but when you look at the photo, it's you who he's looking at, you the viewer, you the parishioner. You are the ones who are called to be founders.

What great work will we do now and in the future by the grace of God and in thanksgiving for our founders?

Amen.