

## Typos, Trumpets and Thanksgiving

### *2 Chronicles 5:13-14*

The Rev. Dr. Gary D. Cecil, pastor

(Delivered for the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Worship Service, 11 AM, November 14, 2021, in honor of when The First Presbyterian Church in Salem, New Jersey, was duly organized by the Presbytery of Philadelphia on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, 1821.)

A man went to Florida ahead of his wife because of a scheduling conflict. Missing her, he sent an email. However, he made a typo which sent his note to a woman recently widowed. It said: *My dear wife, I know you are surprised to hear from me, but I am so looking forward to your arrival in a few days. But I warn you: It sure is hot down here!*

Typos – We’ve made them – sometimes humorous, other times embarrassing or puzzling. There was the McDonald’s sign that read “*10 billion Severed*”; and that box that appears to confirm closing a program? It asked: Are you sure you want to *exist*? I found quite a few typos as I leafed through old records. And

let it be noted that the omission of the Creed is not a typo: neither the 100<sup>th</sup> nor the 150<sup>th</sup> included it, although they did 25 years later. However, one significant typo was a scripture reference for the first sermon in 1821. One source had it as 2 Chronicles *12:13-14*, but this is about King Rehoboam who *did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord*.

This morning’s scripture is the correct one, chosen for a small band of Presbyterians who had been locked out of their worship space and accused of teaching *erroneous and misleading* doctrine. The records claim they endured insults and “wicked attempts to destroy the church”. But *they wanted to exist*, and persisted in building a church where they could worship according to their Reformed principles and faith, praising and thanking the Lord. Surely, a church filled with music and the glory of the Lord was the desire of their hearts!

So, let there be trumpets and singers! On such an occasion, we can imagine the Reverend noting how even the priests could not stand to

minister because of the cloud, and would have gladly sat down himself if it were to fill the house that day!

An ancient church teacher said that the harmony seen in this scripture has such power that if Christ's people bring before the Father in heaven any request with such a divine symphony of instruments and voices, the Father grants it to them – *which is most remarkable*. Today we celebrate what is indeed *most remarkable*: that God granted their request to build a church against opposition, with a desire that God's glory *fill* them, and the light of Christ shine *through* them. In fact, in 1876 they made it a motto: ***That our Light May Shine Out!***

There is a sign in front of an old church that says: *Come for the history; stay for our lively community of faith!* That's how we feel here. *Come* to praise and offer thanksgiving to the Lord of history; *stay* for a community of faith living in the Spirit, a fellowship that believes there is nothing *frozen* about our *chosen* faith.

Let it be known on this 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary that First Presbyterian Church is committed to being a beacon of light, a welcome to all who come; our lives and worship to reflect the hope we have in Jesus Christ, knowing, as did our ancestors, that God is good; the Lord's mercy endures forever. May the glory of the Lord fill God's house! Let the people say: **Amen**.