

OCC Home Devotional

For Family or Group Discussion, or Individual Reflection
Rev. Rob Fredrickson • Sunday, November 11, 2018

A Powerful, Positive Example

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

— 1 Timothy 4:12 (NIV)

Two weekends ago, I was in Las Vegas, competing in the United States Tennis Association's national championships. For me and most of the other guys on my team, it was our first-ever time qualifying for nationals, capping off what was certainly the most epic USTA season of my modest tennis career.

(No, we didn't win the national championship, but we did far better than the "expert pundits" of the amateur tennis world predicted. And we had a great, great time! If you're interested in a more detailed recap, just talk to me.)

Since late-August, when we won the Midwest Sectional championship, I knew I would be in Vegas the last weekend of October. That gave Jeff and I some lead-time to consider our options for Sunday morning, October 28. We could have recruited someone to facilitate the "MP3" youth program in my place. Or we could have had some entirely different youth class or group-type activity that day. But we ended up choosing a third option: using my absence as an opportunity to intentionally involve youth in the leadership of the worship service.

And so, we dubbed October 28 "Youth Spotlight Sunday," and if you were here that day, you know that it was indeed, as Jeff put it, "a great and special morning." You were greeted by ushers Jonah Bersell and Lillie Makinster. Heidi Freydank and Matthew Glass served as our acolytes. You were treated to "God of Wonders" sung by Caleigh Mentzer and "Here I Am to Worship" sung by Grace Gventer. Avery Bersell and Eric Rodd were our liturgists. And Eric, plus Abby Gventer, Garrett Murray, and Julia Peksa, participated in a truly remarkable panel discussion, deftly moderated by Jeff.

Over →

I've listened to the audio recording of the entire October 28 service. (You can, too! It's available at occhurch.org/sermons.) As I listened, I felt sorry to have missed the in-person experience, and at the same time I felt tremendously proud of our church's young people. But most of all, I felt an overflowing sense of hope—an assurance that the younger generations have much to contribute to our future *and* to our present.

Timothy was a comrade and protégé of the apostle Paul. In a letter, Timothy received a bit of a pep talk, including these words: "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity."

From what I heard on the audio recording of Youth Spotlight Sunday, I'd say our youth embody the encouragement given to Timothy. That morning, our young people went beyond attending to participating...beyond participating to leading...and beyond leading to setting an example. Indeed, it was a powerful and positive example!

The October 28 Youth Spotlight Sunday service is now in the rearview mirror. But the challenge remains—the challenge of setting an example for others in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. And it's *not* just a challenge for young people. Consider how the guidance given to Timothy speaks to *you*.

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are...

young, or old, or middle-aged
female or male; single, married, divorced, or widowed
fat or thin (or in between), tall or short (or in between)
poor or rich (or in between)
healthy or physically struggling (or in between)
black, brown, white...of whatever racial/ethnic background
left-handed, or green-eyed, or red-headed, or _____

...but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

We're *all* capable of setting a powerful, positive example—but do we? How can we set an example in our own day-to-day lives, letting our light shine as our youth certainly did on October 28?