



Greetings, Church Family of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian!

This brisk autumn season reminds me that I have an old sweater tucked away in the deep corner of my closet. I have owned this old sweater for an awfully long time, but I still recall the store in Greensboro's Four Seasons Mall where I purchased it. Though a bit tattered and worn with frayed threads around the edges, some might suggest that it has seen better days and, perhaps, should be discarded.

As I remember the sweater, I am reminded of all the good times, and some not so good times, I experienced while wearing it: the dates, the nights out on the town, the struggles over tests in the classroom, the spilled foods and drinks, the snowball fights, baby vomit and all the rest. I've experienced a lot with this sweater, yet with just a quick wash and a shake, it has always kept me warm and comforted.

As we look around our culture and our world, let us be reminded that in times like these we have a church tucked away in a corner of the city of Roanoke; a church we have known for an awfully long time. During this conclusion of the celebration of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church's 125th Anniversary and Homecoming, perhaps you can recall the time you were running around in the Sunday School rooms, the feeling of God's presence in worship, the occasion of your baptism, membership, a wedding or even a funeral of a friend or loved one.

Because the corners of the walls may have been rounded through wear, or the paint has faded from the color of your memory, or the carpet has worn places from the feet of prior saints, some may have suggested that Fifth Avenue has seen better days and, perhaps, needs to be discarded.

But just like my old sweater, with a continued bathing in the love of Christ and the vibrations that come from your renewed energy and ideas, we do not look back at the 125 years which have passed, instead we peer forward with the joyous expectations of the 125 years yet to come. Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church can continue to keep us warm and comforted.

With many blessings on this wonderful and exciting day,
Pastor Vernie L. Bolden, Jr