

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ROCHESTER

Crossing #18

April 12th 2015

One of a handful of iconic buildings in downtown Rochester, the First Presbyterian Church stands out with its looming architecture. The stone and ornate stained glass windows beckon the worshipper to service. As experienced in other local churches, the building, which services this 150-year-old congregation, is a community center. People are in groups catching up on the previous week's events, inquiring about someone's family, while others are organizing the youth classes and after-service delights of coffee and donuts. One need not even enter the sanctuary itself to realize the spiritual and social benefits of practicing one's faith and regularly attending that place of worship. The true heart of Christianity reveals itself upon entering the lobby. Welcoming smiles and handshakes are offered without hesitation to the obvious outsider.

Upon entering the sanctuary, one's eyes immediately are drawn to the massive cluster of organ pipes almost scraping the ceiling.

Mouth agape, "Look at those pipes!"

One sits, anxiously awaiting their massive sound.

The array of supportive wooden beams forms an almost geometric pattern. Along with the towering windows and soaring music, one's eyes, ears, and spirits are lifted upwards. Exquisite ensembles of bell ringers and a vocal choir further enhance the atmosphere and demonstrate the importance of music in worship.

The format of this Presbyterian service was already observed in a previous Crossing in Hayfield (Crossing 17). The unique role of the Lay Leader is again prevalent.

One of the most touching and unifying moments came during the Call to Reconciliation with God. This was a silent confession of sins. A man sitting in front bowed his head low, his shoulders and chest rising and then falling. An immediate connection was formed between this Christian man and non-Christian observer. Both are flawed, sinful creatures under the same Creator, wanting the same forgiveness.

In the Gospel reading of Luke 5: 1-11, Simon Peter says to Jesus:

"Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"

Very fitting.