

Speaker 1: [00:00](#) So in preparing for this day and writing the sermon, which is a little bit different, I want about it in a slightly different way than I normally do. This is higher education Sunday where we celebrate our partnership with TCU, with Brite divinity school. And so in preparation for this, I sat down with dr bill Tucker, who's a member of our congregation. He is the chancellor Emeritus of TCU and a man who literally wrote the book on disciple's history of the Christian Church, disciples of Christ, or at least one of them a Dr. Tucker. You're sitting right over here. Will you stand please so that we can greet you as well.

Speaker 2: [00:40](#) [inaudible]

Speaker 1: [00:47](#) I also sat down with Allison bright, who you heard from just a minute ago. She is a student at Brite divinity school and also a member of our staff. And I also reached out to a number of different, uh, TCU students. And so all that to say is that this sermon this morning is sort of a collaborative effort. Uh, I didn't, uh, do it all alone like I normally do, but I brought in other thoughts and other voices, all that to be said. If you don't like what you hear this morning, blame them, right? Because, no, I'm just kidding. The final product is definitely mine. Uh, but I simply want to say thanks to each of them for their efforts and, uh, helping me put this together. So as we think this morning about the relationship, the connection between this congregation and the university and the divinity school across the street, it's important for us to remember as Dr. Tucker says, that history or heritage plays a key role in shaping our destiny in any attempt to understand the past is not only appropriate but also essential.

Speaker 1: [01:58](#) Some of us know that our denomination, the Christian Church disciples of Christ began essentially as two groups that began in the early 18 hundreds. The first was led by a gentleman by the name of Barton w stone, and he and his group of folks were, we're committed to unity. And so they simply just called themselves Christians, no denomination aspect whatsoever. They were just going to be Christians is a nod to their emphasis on unity. In one of the things that Barton stone in his, his followers sort of focused on the experience of God. They recognize that being a person of faith was not just believing the right doctrines. It wasn't just living a moral life. It was about the way in which we experience God. Now, keep in mind that in the early 18 hundreds this was in the the shadow of the enlightenment, that intellectual and philosophical movement that dominated the world of thought in the 18th essentially that most historians now refer to as the century of philosophy, but

stone and in reaction to that argue that the religious life is about more than what goes on in our heads.

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It's also about what goes on in our hearts. Stones. People believed that unity was more important than uniformity. Now that's an important phrase and so I'm going to say it again. Unity is more important than uniformity. It what are, what matters. Just as much if not more than the beliefs that you hold in your head is the love that you hold in your heart that as Christians, as people of faith, we are to bear with one another despite any differences that we might have in our doctrine, in the beliefs that we hold. That was Barton w stones faction. The other group was was led by a father, son duo by the name of Thomas and Alexander Campbell, and they were Presbyterian ministers and for them unity was also central. In fact, they got in trouble for offering communion, the Lord's supper to people that weren't Presbyterians, which was a no, no at the time was taboo. In fact, they got so much trouble that they were actually kicked out of the Presbyterian church for serving communion to non Presbyterians. They just welcomed everybody to the table and it got them in hot water. Now, the Campbells though, they believe that thought was central. They were intellectuals. In fact, they, one of them once said that a week's worth of debate was worth a year's worth of preaching. That was a preacher. I take offense to that.

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They believe that a week's worth of debate was worth a year's worth of preaching. Whereas for stone it was more about what's going on in your heart. For the Campbell's, it was mostly about the head and so when these two groups got together in the early in the 1830s there were some significant differences in their theology and their understanding of what it meant to be Christian, but the history books will tell us that, that nothing would prohibit them from coming together from joining together. Both of those groups, both of those factions believed that that no opinion, no creed, no doctrine was more important than one's obedience to the commands of Jesus. Most especially his insistence that that his followers, the followers of Jesus are to be one just as he and God were one. And so these two groups would their different theology together in the history books tell us with one spirit and with one accord, they believe that that will followers of Christ may never be United in terms of opinions.

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They must always be United in faith. They understood that faith is experienced in both the heart and the head. And so as this movement began to grow, they quickly realized they've been

key element in the growth, but also the sustainability of this stone Campbell movement was to establish schools and colleges. And so on 1836 they founded bacon college in Georgetown, Kentucky. And a few years later they had established a Bethany college in what is now West Virginia and they would continue to do that. In fact, by the time the civil war had launched, they, by the time of the civil war, they had launched 16 colleges more though than they could sustain in many of those colleges, wilted as quickly as they sprouted. In fact, as Dr. Tucker wrote in his history book, the shoreline of American history is littered with the wrecks of abandoned colleges now that didn't stop them from continuing to establish and build schools. And in fact in 1873 in a little town called Thorpe Springs. Yup. I said it wrong again. I was corrected after the first service. There's only one spring in Thorpe in Thorpe Springs, Texas, which is about 40 miles from here. Did I say it again?

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One one spring in hood County, about 40 miles from here, which was just a stagecoach stop on the cattle frontier. On the first Monday in September, there were two brothers, Addison and Randolph Clarke, who with the help of their father, Joseph opened the doors of ad Wren male and female college. That day they had 13 students eager to begin their education. Now ad ran was a combination of both their names Addison and ran off and, and although both of them were preachers in the stone Campbell movement, they decided not to call ad ran a Christian college because they didn't want to denominationalized, that's their word. They didn't want to denomination Ally's their school, whatever those first few years they struggled to make ends meet and they reached a conclusion and reached out to the church

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who willingly adopted and endorsed that college. And so a few years later the trustees got together and they decided to change the name of ADTRAN to add ran Christian university signaling an even stronger tie. The church. Now, despite that endorsement and that support, they continued to struggle and enrollment hovered somewhere between 300 and 400 and yet despite that they were never able to match income and expenditures. And so in 1895 day decided to say goodbye to Thorpe spring and move the school to Waco, just a few miles down the road from the Baptist school known as Baylor now in both Thorp spring and also in Waco. They were on the outskirts of town too far at that time for students and faculty to get to the church that was downtown. And so the school formed a university church that would meet each Sunday in the chapel

and they simply called it university Christian Church, which should sound familiar to us.

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Now some of you may know what happened next. In 1910 there was a mysterious fire that destroyed the campus and so TCU, they had changed the name and the process. Texas Christian university moved from Waco to here in Fort worth, a move that worked out well for many of us should we say in the university, church would continue to meet on campus. And they would, we would officially become a congregation in 1917 while still meeting in the chapel across the street until starting to build this building in 1929 although it would take a few years now over the years UCC and TCU and later what would become Brite divinity school. We've enjoyed a strong positive relationship, a partnership that has served both the university and the seminary and this congregation. Well, in fact, in many ways TCU and bright are sort of the the flagship amongst disciples schools and in the same way UCC is one of the flagship churches in our denomination is he, in the early days the school in the church were bound together.

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We pushed and supported one another. They were partners in challenging conversations about what it means to be faithful about what it means to have an informed faith and what that looks like, what it looks like to have a faith that is integrated like in an article written in 2001 and the magazine by Dr. Tucker talking about what the sea and TCU represents. He said this, the thought and practice of disciples serve TCU well emphasizing the reasonableness of faith. Disciples believe in God with the top of their minds as well as the bottom of their hearts. Inclusive in spirit, disciples are best known for their defining interest in the cause of Christian unity. You see, in the same way UCC is a congregation that fits well with the university because we to value a faith that involves both the head and the heart, not one or the other.

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It must involve both. Unlike the university, we too are are forward thinking. We're curious about matters of faith and life. We've been on the forefront of issues like the involvement of women in leadership inclusion, the use of Bible as a tool to inform our faith, our relationship with our brothers and sisters who may or may not share our beliefs. Now in fairness, in an honesty, there have been some times when the church and the university have not been on the same page. Back during the civil rights movement when TCU but not bright with slow to integrate. And during the 80s when I was a student here, the denomination was encouraging the university to have to divest

from any holdings that they may have had in South Africa and the apartheid movement, but yet distilled that relationship, that connection, that partnership. That's who we are, that's our heritage.

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We share the same DNA and like stone and Campbell said, we don't always have to agree on everything because unity is more important than uniformity. Now, interestingly enough, TCU has continued to grow as a university while at the same time our denomination has gotten smaller. And that's something that is not just happening here in Fort worth. It's reflective of what we see all over the country as college enrollment as at a whole time. High church participation is isn't an all time low. And so in thinking about this relationship that continues to exist, I asked Dr. Tucker as we sat, why does TCU need UCC and vice versa? And he thought for a moment, and finally he said with all of his wisdom, I'm not sure that TCU does need UCC anymore except that except that in tradition and intention of practicing a religion that is informed that the church can provide opportunity for enrichment, for opportunities to practice our faith.

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If TCU is going to be a place whose mission is to educate individuals to think and to act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens and the global community, the students and the faculty and the staff, the TCU community needs places like this where they can engage not just their minds but also their hearts. Now I also asked James Flowers, who's a TCU student that you'll hear from and just a few moments who interestingly enough, is a Presbyterian, much like Thomas and Alexander Campbell. And I asked James that exact same question that I asked Dr. Tucker and he said this, he said, TCU needs UCC to keep itself grounded. And while the university and the church may not have a relationship like they did at it's founding the to have a symbiotic relationship, the school benefits from the church because it's a safe place for students and reminds everyone, everyone at TCU, how they should treat one another, that they are to remember that just like it says on the side of our building that all are welcome.

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Whether or not they are Christian, whether or not they share the same belief structure you went on to say the church benefits from being connected to TCU because it gives the church and easy outlet of serving the community outside of ourselves. Churches and religious organizations, he said can get caught up in their own affairs and completely leave out the outside world to become insulated in inward thinking, but UCC

doesn't do that. He says, this congregation knows that part of their job is to serve the TCU community while part of TCU, his job is to serve and to give back the church.

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You see in our early days, we needed one another. We relied on each other for our mere survival. But now things have changed, evolved, and now it's a partnership. It's a relationship based, not just on tradition and survival, but also on intention. You see, as the senior minister of this incredible congregation, as a proud alum of TCU and an avid horn fan, and as a member of the board of trustees at Brite divinity school, what I have come to see is that we have moved away from an obligation in order to survive to a choice in order to enrich, to help us all become the very best versions that we can become, both as individuals and as institutions, as communities do not be conformed to the world. Paul said, but let us be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we can discern what is the will of God that we might love God the top of our minds, the bottom of our heart.