

THE WHOLE STORY...

BY SHARLYN STARE

In 1968 we came to CHPC to “get married.” The new pastor, Jerry Kirk, asked us, “Why do you want a church wedding?” We stumbled through that question. He said, “I’m not in the business of marrying people. I’m in the business of building Christian homes, are you interested?” It was a viable option.

He then asked, “What is your personal relationship with Jesus Christ?” Barry and I looked at each other and mumbled something about being raised in a Christian home. Jerry sold us a book — *A Taste of New Wine* by Keith Miller, a fellow engineer. He said, “Come back and we’ll talk about Keith and what he discovered about life.”

During the next 8 months of premarital counseling, Jerry described marriage under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He shared Scriptures and stories of successes and failures in his own marriage to help us understand this new concept.

We thought we knew what love was — little did we know. As the months went by, we learned to reveal more of our real selves to each other and we found more love and acceptance. We slowly began to understand a God who knows everything about us and still loves us unconditionally. . . enough to die for us. We knew God’s forgiveness. On our wedding day we made a three-way covenant: to one another and to Jesus Christ as Savior.

Saying ‘I do’ just started the adventure. Things that caused our earthly relationship to grow were similar to what helped our relationship with Christ to grow.

1. WE’D TALK AND WRITE TO ONE ANOTHER AND CHERISH OUR COMMUNICATION.

Likewise, as we studied God’s Word, it marinated our lives. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness .” 2 TIM 3:16 We learned to



STARE’S WEDDING DAY 1969

express our love to God for who He is, and to pray and sing using His Words. — and we had fun doing it.

2. WE’D SPEND TIME WITH OTHERS WHO KNEW OUR SPOUSE. God provided mature Christians at CHPC and around the world to grow our relationship with each other and Christ. This ‘Family in Christ’ continues to challenge, mentor, nurture, equip and hold us accountable. We’ve experienced the truth of EPHESIANS 4:13-16 & ROMANS 12:1-2.

3. WE’D STEWARD OUR TIME, TALENTS, MONEY AND ENERGY FOR OUR SPOUSE’S BENEFIT SO THAT HE/SHE CAN BE ALL CHRIST INTENDS. Jerry Kirk was very clear, “Begin your relationship with Christ by tithing time, talents and money, and then increase your giving as He leads. God owns everything. So ‘hold things loosely,’ serve with excellence, and be good stewards. These reveal *whose* you are, and *who* you really serve.

Over the years, we have gone through seasons of forgetfulness. Busyness, ‘distractions’ and crises creep in. Things that make life together ‘fun’ and purposeful begin to slip away. Words of love and affirmation diminish. Our premarital counseling warned us about such times. Jerry Kirk said, “Renew the lease on your marriage covenant regularly. Memorize your wedding vows and say them to each other. God is *for you* and will renew your marriage!” Refocusing on Christ does draw us back into right relationship with each other.

So, each June we stand before God, our pastor(s) and witnesses to formally renew our vows. We praise God for His faithfulness, and trust in Christ’s power and purpose for us (PHIL 4:13). We have been formed and transformed by the grace of God in and through our relationship with a unique community of faith at College Hill Presbyterian Church.

Thank you for your special part in our lives. Come celebrate with Family. Save the date: Sat, June 22nd... and tell others.