

Good News Folk Reunion, Clyde Eisenbeis
9 Jul 1993

This is a wonderful event! The 25th anniversary! Who among us imagined what it would be like all these years later!

For me, this is a very special time. Being on campus always brings back many memories to me.

I remember coming to UND on a hot summer day in July to register for college. And then I remember my Mom, unable to hold back her tears, hugging me as I left home for college. Little did I know of the adventure I was about to begin.

And what an adventure it was. There were many things that were very different. The freedom to come and go as I pleased. The extra time between classes to study or goof off. The many strangers that smiled at us as we walked around the campus. The many new friendships that seemed to accumulate each week.

The late nights discussing Vietnam, black power, pollution, Kent State, Indian Reservations, ... religion. What is fair? Who is right? What is the best way to make things better for all, rich and poor?

That we were even given the opportunity to spend four years of our lives to study, learn, and discuss, really was an extraordinary freedom that even today I don't always fully appreciate. Can you imagine life without having been exposed to college life?

And then there was Christus Rex. I was an active participant in church during grade school and high school. My church had a very small congregation of about 75 members. It was quite conservative ... the men sat on one side of the aisle and the women on the other side.

We did not have English services until I was in junior high school, only German services. There was even a heated discussion once on whether the inside of the church could be painted a color other than white.

The members had a strong faith steeped in tradition, and they successfully passed that faith on to us. They clearly distinguished right from wrong, and good from bad, and honest from dishonest. And for that nurturing, caring upbringing, I will forever be grateful.

But then I came to know Christus Rex, the students, the staff, and the pastor, Gust Kopka. What a revelation! While the world of black and white, right and wrong, had begun to blur

into a gray during my senior year in high school, the total blending, and the resulting dialog and discussion really came to a climax during college. And the role of the church in this complicated world added to the chaos in my mind.

It began simply enough with the folk songs sung here. When I first heard a folk service here at Christus Rex, I wasn't sure what to think. Guitars in church? A tambourine in church? Clapping in church?

But after the initial shock, I realized that I liked it. Folk songs are really unique in that they are easy to sing, they are best sung as a group, and they always have a message. And while I love to sing, the messages are what got to me.

The questions alone, in these songs, had a terrific impact. Where have all the flowers gone? Brother where are you? Who will answer? Tell me why you're crying my son? Judas what you doin' with the chief priest? How many roads must a man walk down?

And these raised other questions, Should the church play a role in shaping and changing the world? How important is tradition in church? He was a Rebel??? Jesus a Rebel?

Pastor Gust Kopka, exposed me to a new world with his insights and sermons. Bonhoeffer, lay participation, reading lessons, helping with communion, the Cotton Patch Bible series ... becoming excited with spreading the Good News.

The Good News Folk gave me the opportunity to proclaim the good news to others and provided me with the stimulus to continue with the spreading of this Good News after college.

Remember the trips around North Dakota and Minnesota? Remember the sleeping bags in the churches and the hot dishes? Remember the costumes we wore?

Remember the people who walked quickly out the door trying to avoid our smiles and the others who came to us excited and brimming with joy? And the songs! Who can forget the songs!!!

The friendships we gained back then still live with us today. The hopes and dreams of then remain our constant companion in our thoughts now. These memories will quite likely live on with us forever for we are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord.