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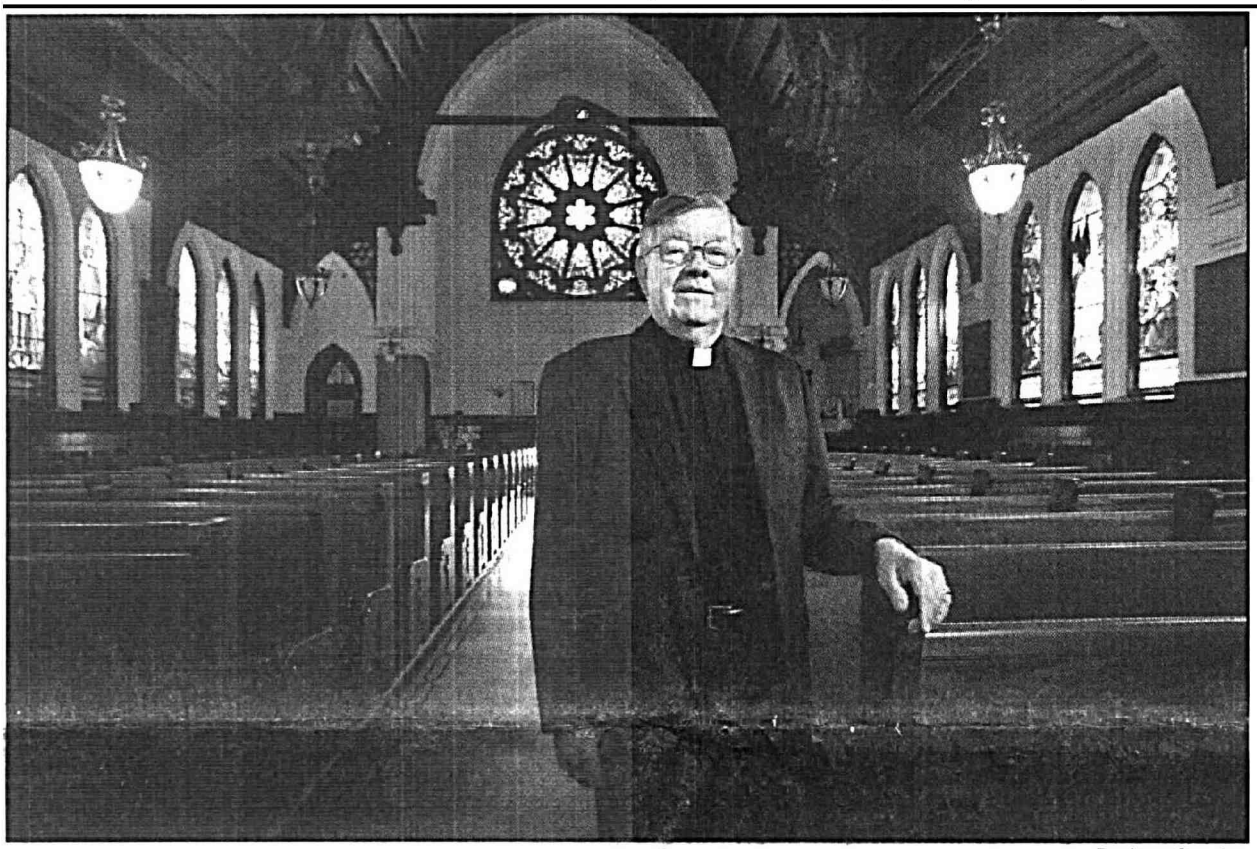

By Jerry Sowden

The Rev. Canon Ed Lowrey of Foxburg has been delivering sermons from the pulpit for 50 years and is now the pastoral care associate at St. John's Episcopal Church in Franklin. Some of his duties in Franklin including filling in for the Rev. Holly Davis when needed and helping with Communion.

Man's call to serve God has given him much to remember in 50 years

By JILL HARRY
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After 50 years behind the pulpit, the Rev. Canon Ed Lowrey has learned a thing or two about serving God wherever He leads you.

Lowrey grew up in Warren, was ordained in Foxburg, served in Maine, Pittsburgh and Michigan, came back to Foxburg, then took an assignment in Franklin.

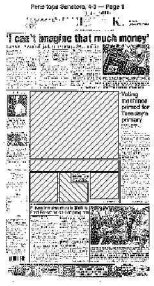
Through all the moves, Lowrey said he developed a stronger love of God and greater passion for outreach.

"The deeper I got into it, the more enthusiastic I felt," he said.

Lowrey's story began at his hometown church of Trinity Memorial Church in Warren, where the rector encouraged all the young men of the congregation to consider the ministry.

"I felt called to the position, of course I was young then, 17," Lowrey said.

Because of the rector's connections to the Anglican Church of Canada, Lowrey spent six years studying at the



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Huron Anglican Theological Center in Ontario.

He received his degrees in 1960 and 1962. He was ordained a deacon and later a priest at the Memorial Church of Our Father Episcopal Church in Foxburg, where he was also assigned as the vicar.

Lowrey struck up a special friendship with one of the parishioners, Melanie, whom he married before becoming a reverend.

"She's been on board the whole time," Lowrey said of his longtime love.

The pair raised three children, Douglas, Rebecca and Patrick.

The family moved with Lowrey as he had a short tenure in Bangor, Maine.

"We did two Maine winters, that was enough," he said with a chuckle.

After the stint up north, the Lowrey family headed to Pittsburgh, where the priest served two parishes. He earned a master's degree in advanced pastoral studies from the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, specializing in chemical dependency and mental health issues.

When the family returned to Foxburg in 1987, Lowrey returned to his position as vicar at the Memorial Church.

He held that position for 25 years, retiring in 2001 but serving until 2012.

"I just kept right on working," Lowrey said of his semi-retired state.

He was also employed as a drug and alcohol abuse counselor for many years and held a seat on Foxburg Borough Council.

Lowrey said all the moving taught him one important thing — "ministry is everywhere."

"It's taught me that I am very lucky and thankful to be called to the ministry," he said.

His move to St. John's Episcopal Church in Franklin brought him a new title, pastoral care associate. It is a volunteer position and allows him to focus on outreach, his favorite part of the priesthood.

"Church is important; worship is important," he said. "But taking it outside the church is where real change can happen."

One of his main duties was to help launch the church's new Stephen Ministry, which he described as "one-on-one quality Christian care."

"It's a tremendous thing for the church," Lowrey said.

He also serves as the church's supply minister, filling in for the rector, the Rev. Holly Davis, when needed and helping serve Communion.

"It's been a blessing," Davis said of Lowrey's presence at the Franklin parish.

Davis said the difference in the length of service between the pair has been no trouble at all.

"He's been ordained 10 times longer than me," Davis said.

"We have very different gifts for ministry," she said. "He's always been a complement to my skills and has always worked with me."

"Ed is a person of great faith and humility and an example to all of us in the priesthood," the Rev. Sean Rowe, Episcopal bishop of the northwestern diocese, said.

Rowe has known Lowrey for more than 20 years and said the Lowrey has served the church well in all his assignments.

The national church recognized the faithfulness of Lowrey by bestowing the honor of canon on him during a churchwide convention.

Lowrey said he was one of only five people to receive the title that year.

"I was very surprised be be included in that," he said. "It has meant a lot to my family."

Other highlights of his five decades with the church include meeting Catholic Cardinal Jozsef Mindszenty, helping the denomination navigate civil rights issues in the 1970s, building a new parish hall in Maine and celebrating the 125th anniversary of the Foxburg church.

"He has seen the church through many changes," Rowe said.

Rowe will be on hand to celebrate Lowrey's golden anniversary during a special service at 1 p.m. today at St. John's. Rowe will give the liturgy and Lowrey will lead Communion.

"It's my privilege to preach on that occasion," Rowe said.

Lowrey's son, Douglas, will also participate in the public service, which will be followed by a reception.

Rowe said many preachers get into the ministry later in life, making Lowrey's long tenure something to really celebrate.

"Fifty years — (that's) certainly quite an accomplishment," Rowe said.

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