

Kickball Showdown
by Amanda Fair Horton

The storm clouds gathered as members from Central and Second Presbyterian Churches took the field behind the Jewish Community Center, at six-o'clock in the evening, Friday, the thirteenth of May, in the year of our Lord, 2011. For a few minutes it seemed as though we would win the first kickball game by forfeit, because our opposition was nowhere to be found. Then suddenly, from across the field, in matching navy blue t-shirts, they appeared in droves, with a look of self-assured victory in their eyes. It was very biblical. A modern-day, David-meets-Goliath showdown. Had the scene taken place in the Arizona desert, there surely would have been tumbleweeds rolling past and a whistling soundtrack playing on the stereo. Little did they know our diversity would meet their adversity with some surprising advantages.

Our first inning seemed weak to the Seconders. There was a great deal of fumbling and disorientation, but it was all part of the plan for the Central Predestinators. We fooled them into a relaxed state of confidence, and by the second inning, it was clear we were there to win. To everyone's amazement, Greg Copenhefer took out the oldest woman on the opposing team (one of his contemporaries..). She didn't know what hit her. As the woman slowly stood up and dusted herself off she said,

"I've never played before. I didn't know it was tackle kickball."

By the third inning, we were leading by three points, but Second came back strong. They had a few tricks up their short-sleeves, as well. The bases were loaded with hopeful Seconders, when a man of thirty, or so, kicked the ball to the back of the field, and brought the blue shirts home.

The storm clouds gathered once more, and when that happens, in the words of that famous song, "into each life some rain must fall." God said, "let there be rain" and there was; a sprinkling of water in the heat of the day. It was baptismal. It was Presbyterian. Our spirits were briefly dampened, but our bodies had been refreshed, and the Spirit granted us a second wind—enough to suck the wind back out of Second Pres' navy sails with our first double play! By the end of the fourth inning the Central Predestinators were in the lead once more!

The fifth and sixth innings were equally surprising with Second Pres reclaiming the lead, Central trumping their lead and Second trumping us all over again.

Ryan Althaus, of Sweaty Sheep Ministries, was overwhelmed as he frantically tried to keep accurate score. He recruited the sharp eye of Carolyn Cardwell and was brought up to speed. Not an easy feat, as there were twists and turns and a few wipe-outs throughout. One Central spectator and cheerleader, Dawn Biggs, said,

"This kickball game is tense."

By the seventh inning, the blue shirts had maintained their lead and were determined to stay there. We Central Predestinators were becoming wary of our fate. We needed to regroup. Being the good Presbyterians we are, our team formed a committee and held a meeting to debate kicking order. Should we put our strongest kickers ahead this time and leave the others Predestinators in the dust? No. Our committee voted unanimously

that, win or lose, everyone should have an equal opportunity to kick. Our brief deliberation slowed the pace down enough to fool the Seconders into thinking our abilities had been irreparably weakened. How could they have known we had been recharged by God's Wildly Inclusive Love!

The Predestinators made another momentous come-back! Thanks to some brilliant pitching by Owen Cardwell-Copenhefer and Amanda Horton, some out-of-the-park-bombastic kicks by Nathan Biggs-Penton, Johnny Edwards, Tom Parmenter, some other strong kicks by Owen and Zoe Cardwell-Copenhefer and some fast running, catching, and tagging by Greg Copenhefer, Megan and Renee Edwards, Beth Eirk, Tom Hay, Michelle List, Beth Olliges and Michael Purintun, we caught up with the blue shirts once more. By the middle of the eighth and final inning, the score remained tied (much to Second Pres' chagrin...)

Who would break the tie? It was anyone's guess. It might have easily gone to Second Pres, but our team was blessed by an angel in disguise: Renee Edwards.

The field was hushed as one strong-legged, mighty male blue shirt stepped up to the plate with a look of fire in his eyes. The sun blazed down through the heavens onto two teams of Presbyterians covered with sweat and dust— their spirits filled with an anticipation much like what the Israelites may have felt when Moses parted the Red Sea...

Despite the blue shirt's stature and severity, pitcher Nathan Biggs-Penton was not intimidated. Nathan's pitch was strong, and the ball rolled to the middle of the plate as the final moments of truth began to unfold. The blue shirt's kick was unbelievable. For a moment our hearts sank. The kick was high. It was lightning fast. It was headed for Renee. Would she fumble? Would she duck? Would she break a nail? No sir! She was in it to win it. Renee Edwards caught the ball with all the might of God's blessed Creation! In those few seconds, Second placed second and the fate of Central Presbyterian Church's Predestinators was revealed: Our destiny was victory! We won our first kickball game in church history, 19 to 18!

We look forward to seeing all of you at our next game on Friday!