

“These Are Mine, Beloved!”  
C Easter 7; John 17:20-26  
June 2, 2019; 10:00 am  
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO  
Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

<sup>20-23</sup> I'm praying not only for them  
But also for those who will believe in me  
Because of them and their witness about me.  
The **goal is for all of them to become one heart and mind—**  
Just as you, Father, are in me and I in you,  
So they might be one heart and mind with us.  
Then the world might believe that you, in fact, sent me.  
The same glory you gave me, I gave them,  
So they'll be as unified and together as we are—  
I in them and you in me.  
Then they'll be mature in this oneness,  
And give the godless world evidence  
That you've sent me and loved them  
In the same way you've loved me.

<sup>24-26</sup> Father, I want those you gave me  
To be with me, right where I am,  
So they can see my glory, the splendor you gave me,  
Having loved me  
Long before there ever was a world.

Righteous Father, the world has never known you,  
But I have known you, and these disciples know  
That you sent me on this mission.  
I have made your very being known to them—  
Who you are and what you do—  
And continue to make it known,  
So that your love for me  
Might be in them  
Exactly as I am in them.

**UNITY AIN'T EASY!**

The wrong way to achieve unity in the church is to try and appeal to everyone. The church humor magazine "The Door" facetiously announced these newly formed churches seeking to do just that:

Potluck Assembly

Little Bit O'Bible Church

Church of the Big P.A.

The Short-Term Pastor Center

Theology-Free Church

The Inaccurate Heart of Mary Catholic Church

Seldom United Church

Bill Gates' Memorial Geek Orthodox

New Wife Fellowship

Church of the Perpetual Building Program

Comfortable Pew Family Center

Clean Bathroom Bible Temple

Better Than the Rest Believer's Fellowship

Legalist Bondage Assembly

The Church Where the Pastor's Family Runs Everything

The Two-Or-More-But-Sometimes-Less-Depending-On-Who-Shows-Up Bible Church

Feelgood Fellowship

Twist-and-Shout Revival Center

John Green, "Newly Formed Churches," *The Door*, March-April 2000, p. 15.

ME: IDEAS

Unity ain't easy

What CAN we agree on?

**We are beloved of God and so is our neighbor.**

Keep that focus!

You are mine

You are beloved.

If you've learned nothing else from me, note this:  
You are beloved children of God and so is your neighbor. And the stranger, widow, orphan, immigrant and foreigner in your midst.  
UCC slogan: That they may all be one.

My charge to you as we launch into this season:  
a) Keep practicing Holy Hospitality  
b) They'll know we are \_\_\_\_\_ by our love.  
Christian. Open, inclusive, welcoming of all.  
Open-minded, open hearts, open to new ideas and experiences.  
c) Keep being the Beloved Community.

Remind yourself every day—wrap up in a scarf or a prayer shawl; look in a mirror and repeat these words:

I am a beloved child of God.

Then, look at your neighbor –of all walks, shapes and sizes, and say, “YOU are beloved!”

George Hermanson—Holy Hospitality

Here is a clue why Christianity grew. Its rationale was holy hospitality. Its method of conversion was not, "Believe this," but, "Here is my confession, and here is my action." Try it out. Live it. Love one another. Take care and walk with compassion for this is sacred space and these are sacred people - care deeply.

We claim our faith and support others in the process of claiming their faith. It may look different from ours. However there is a trajectory of understanding.

It is in the character of God who seeks us and needs us. God has assigned us the care of the world and all who inhabit it. We are to model ourselves around this dynamic love that is fresh in every generation. This lure of God is directed to the dream of God where all will enjoy holy hospitality. Now this is not uniformity nor one-size-fits- all.

Holy hospitality is to be the place where all grow in wisdom and strength where the blind see and the lame walk - this is meaning of unity - to be the church of welcome to variety of colors around us - to be a rainbow in a world that seek monochromatic experience. In this way our testimony is a living organism. We practice our faith by living for the common good.

My practice in lectionary preaching is to search the internet to see how others handle the topic of the week. It came as no particular surprise that many ministers preaching on Jesus' prayer for the unity of all believers included lists of those they thought needed to be excluded for various reasons. At least some Christians do not set a priority to overcome our differences and live in unity with peace, justice, and harmony. Perhaps when they say "let us agree to disagree," they mean "let us agree to disagree until the Lord shows you that I am right."

Yet what happens in the church simply reflects what goes on in wider society.

The German philosopher Schopenhauer compared the human race to a bunch of porcupines huddling together on a cold winter's night. He said, "The colder it gets outside, the more we huddle together for warmth; but the closer we get to one another, the more we hurt one another with our sharp quills. And in the lonely night of earth's winter eventually we begin to drift apart and wander out on our own and freeze to death in our loneliness."

Christian spirituality is, in its essence, surprising and countercultural. It defies our expectations and challenges any orthodoxy or behavioral expectation in its quest to be faithful to the "sacrament of the present moment." (Pierre de Caussade)

Authentic faith breaks down barriers, goes beyond polarization, and expands the circle of concern to embrace enemies as well as

friends. The attractiveness of the church is in its unpredictable openness to whatever God calls for, beyond our political, religious, ethical, and relational stereotypes.