

“The inviting church where no one is happy”

So what’s the deal with the minister wanting a church where no one is happy?

It is a matter of the time in which we live. We live in divided times and times of change – where the best we can hope for is that no one will be happy (at someone else’s expense). It occurred to me several years ago, as I watched the church struggle with “inclusive language”. If one side was happy – that meant that the other side was not. It occurred to me that our goal was for everyone to be **equally uncomfortable**. We should be moving forward – as quickly as we can – while still **holding together**. **Uncomfortable**.

So my hope for the church in our time is to hold together – but we will be uncomfortable.

Last week I was talking about demographics. I suggested that the church has 10 years to figure out what is happening next. But this morning I need to talk about a problem which can drastically impact the church. Changing everything in 1 year – or three years.

And that is if we indulge in a fight. If we indulge in a fight it will be the last thing we do – as a congregation. Because it could cut through our human resources. The church has some human resources to spare – but not much. Not enough to hurt ourselves in a fight.

Diversity in a Presbyterian Church is presumed. In the constitution it says “**God alone is Lord of the conscience**” and there are “truths and forms with respect to which people of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies **to exercise mutual forbearance** toward each other.” This matter of individual conscience and mutual forbearance is held in balance and tension with the understanding that we, **as a group**, will decide what the will of the Christ, is by the Spirit, for the church.

This brings us to the first question on the questionnaire.

The faith, fellowship and mission of Calvin Presbyterian Church is more important than particular theological positions.

Yes

NO

I already know that for some their answer must be no. Yet the life of the congregation depends on the breadth of us saying: Calvin is more important to me than the particular debate going on in the denomination. The denomination has been arguing about sexuality and homosexuality for 45 years. IU don’t see that the debate will go away any time soon. The key is that we live together in the midst of disagreement and that we respect each other. Hence the second question:

Respect for others, and care for each other in our fellowship is more important than reaching a particular theological conclusion.

Yes

NO

Whatever our differences – Christ demands our respect for each other.

But more than that, this is not about surviving. It is about thriving, and living the invitation into Christ. We need to not just live with our diversity, but to thrive: finding that which is worth sharing.

You see, no matter our differences, we have things to share. We have God's purpose to share. We have the discipleship of hope to share and we have the abundance of God's grace to give away. So we have choices to make. Is our crowning achievement that no one is happy? Or could we bear the fullness of **our fellowship** while **sharing God's abundant love and amazing grace**.

The choices we make, the actions we pursue will result in how Christ will be present in the future, as we build Christ's next church.

May God bless us in our building, the building of Christ's next church. May God bless our choices and our actions.