



e - Votion



Dear Friends,

Today I am reading I Corinthians 1:10-18:

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, 'I belong to Paul,' or 'I belong to Apollos,' or 'I belong to Cephas,' or 'I belong to Christ.' Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Devotion:

The church was created by God to witness to the good news of God's love shown to us in Jesus Christ. We exist to share God's love and to bring people into a community where God's love is shared, and to help people grow into followers of Jesus. There are so many people, even people within the reach of our church, who are hungry for the love of God that we have been given to share. We are commissioned to teach the way of love, the hope of the world. Many many people do not realize how urgently they need to learn this way of love. Our mission is important and urgent!



All that said, it makes sense that we should organize the life of our church around this mission. And.... it makes sense that we should be very careful not to let anything go on in our church that hinders our mission. Can you think of anything that might go on that would contradict the good news of God's love? Is there anything that would turn people away rather than draw them into the love and new life we have to offer?

Paul wrote this letter to the church at Corinth because he heard some things were going on that contradicted the message of the love of God, and prevented the mission of the church from being

carried out. He wanted to bring these things to the surface, explain them in the context of the Christian faith so that the people there would know what to do. Even though Paul wrote this letter to Corinth, there are some things that he said that can help us today.

Paul heard that there were people who were not getting along very well and weren't united with the same purpose. The people were meeting in different houses and following the leaders they knew. Some followed Paul, some followed Apollos, some followed Peter, and some just said they belonged to Christ. We don't know all the details about their divisions--maybe they were theological, or maybe they were personally attracted to one leader or another. You have probably heard and from time to time used the phrase, "We agree to disagree." It is OK to disagree. We can disagree without being divided. Corinth was a very diverse community. There were people of different races, national origins, religious origins, socio-economic classes, and even education and disposition. Some preferred to use Greek "wisdom" philosophy with their faith, some interpreted Paul's understanding of grace as an excuse for moral laxity, some expressed their Christian freedom in ways that caused problems for others. Some were claiming they were superior to others, for one reason or another. They were a MESS!!!!

We live in a diverse culture today. And sometimes we think that our beliefs, our way is the best way, and we give the impression that we superior to others. When we do that, we lose sight of our purpose which is to share the love of Christ with the world.

It is so easy to point fingers at people who are a little different than us. I invite all of us to search ourselves and prayerfully determine if there are any attitudes or actions that might hinder the mission of our church. Are you in conflict with someone that you haven't been able to resolve? Are you holding on to hurt feelings that you haven't been able to let go of? Is there anything getting in the way of the friendship and love for your friends in the church? Do you think the church should organize itself to meet our needs rather than the new people we are seeking to share Christ's love with? Has anyone tried to sit in your pew lately? :)

Sometimes our attitudes are so subtle that they work in us without our knowledge. But they can still affect the ability of the church to witness to the love of God and to bring people into relationship with God. Paul reminds us that God's grace is available for everyone. We ALL matter to the kingdom of God. Paul also reminds us that the real sign of Christian maturity is not having all the right answers, but is the ability to love. Paul's description of love in I Corinthians 13 is one of the most beautiful descriptions of love: Love is patient, love is kind, love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. Love doesn't insist on its own way. Love is not resentful or irritable; does not rejoice in wrong, but rejoices in the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

May we be people of love, who put our mission first, and work together of one mind and purpose. :) Our diversity strengthens us if we love one another and share one common purpose.



Please pray:

- For Calvin Garland, at JCMC
- For Peggy Jones (Sharon Cradic's mother) at JCMC
- For Barbara Marrs, (Mendy Hall's mother). Barbara will have surgery on her heart to replace a

valve in February. She is pretty weak so needs our prayers.

- Unspoken requests and all on our prayer list.

Calendar:

- Food distribution at the food pantry: 1/25
- Ad Hoc Youth Ministry team 3:30 1/26
- Connections Pillar 5:30 1/26
- Acolyte Training 1/26
- Worship Pillar 2/3 7 pm

"Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words."

-- St Francis of Assisi

Blessings,

Jane Taylor
First United Methodist Church
Johnson City TN