

United Memorial Church

Sunday, February 22, 2009

Each week while a group of us were meeting with Catherine to learn more about Pastoral Care, she would pose a number of questions for thoughtful discussion.

During one of the first get togethers she asked a question about how we would vision the church in today's society and to put that vision into a few words. My few words turned out to be a wonderful basis for a sermon down the road.

As Christians any vision of our Christian Church would have to have as its center – it's core, a deep faith and belief in God as being our divine creative being whose center is love. You have heard that expression before from me. God is a divine creative being whose center is love.

God took it all a step further through the birth of the baby in the manger. God in flesh, God as human, God in and through Christ. Not only did God give us the gift of the baby but later that same baby through God died on a cross to free each and everyone of us. He gave his son up for us.

While on earth Jesus went about teaching, preaching, healing and being just a great man of faith. He then chose his disciples to follow him and to accept the responsibility of carrying on his church in the early communities in which they lived.

But it did not end there. The movement continued and some 2,000 years later, it still continues and today we have

God, Christ and ourselves and all the faithful branching out and reaching all parts of the world in which we live.

Perhaps we could think of it all as a big flower. The center of the flower of course is God, his son Jesus and that spirit which helps us to be the kind of person God would have us be. We then are the petals of the flower – reaching out in many directions and as we reach out we each carry our special gifts, which are unique to each one individually.

As we go forth with our gifts we carry the gospel of the good news.

In our church service we share music, prayer, God’s word and helpful discussion that assists us in understanding our faith. We carry the being of that faith family we call United Memorial.

As we go, we exude friendship; we exude love; we exude compassion; we exude caring; we listen attentively; we visit; we walk hand in hand with each other.

Many of us perhaps feel that we are not good enough or that we lack the special training of the professionals.

Remember we are all ministers in our own right. The disciples Jesus chose were ordinary folk like you and I. In Jesus’ day they were the branches of God’s tree.

In this modern day we are the petals – and like the petals, go forth to bring the good news.

Remember our Scripture lessons this morning. In Exodus, “You will be my Holy nation and serve me as priests”.

In 1 Peter: “You are God’s chosen and special people. You are a group of royal priests”.

**Finally in Revelations we read:
“He lets us rule as kings and to serve God his father as priests”.**

Indeed we are all called to be ministers. Here at United Memorial let us be rooted in God, in Jesus and in the Holy Spirit and let us branch out from this building into our daily routine, to our friends, to our neighbors and to our whole community and let us all carry the gospel of the Good News – God loves us and we love our God and in doing so, we love one another.

In your bulletin this morning you will read a copy of an editorial from the latest United Church Observer.

Although we do have 21 families receiving the Observer here at United Memorial, I wanted all to read the article by Paul Smith entitled “Bold Transformation”. When you read this article at home pay special attention to the second paragraph. As I read it I was shocked. The author claimed that congregations who sit about grieving the decline in members or who remain in denial of change are in what he calls a “palliative care journey”. Isn’t that scary? Imagine a church in palliative care. We all know what that means.

During the past few months Catherine has talked about change. In her message in our annual report she says, and I quote, “our traditions have served us well, they provide a solid base on which to move into the future and a future, that in the words of our creed, we believe in God who is created and is creating. She further states that she looks forward to being part of that creation process here at United Memorial”.

We must all be part of that creating process. Each and every one of us must be part of the process. Bring your concerns forth. Bring your ideas forth. Be a creator.

We have a very firm foundation here at U.M. We must keep that foundation as a basis for our journey into the future.

We must never allow our faith family here at U.M. to be in a state of Palliative Care.

How you and I vision our church for the future, with God at the center creating, with Catherine hand in hand in ministry with us, we will move ahead, we will be bolder than we every have been and we will proclaim God's love in this family of faith, in our community. May we always know that God loves us, and we love God and in doing so we share that love with one another.