



The Methodist Messenger
SEPTEMBER 2019
Whiteville United Methodist Church



Sunday School - 9:00 a.m.
Sunday Worship Service - 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday Communion Service - 6:00 p.m.

DISAGREE LIKE CHRISTIANS: RESPECT AND REASON

"But Christians never disagree with anybody," you might come back.

If that is your comment, most of the Church would beg to differ. It is not uncommon for Christians to disagree with others. As a matter of fact, Christians often have disagreements with other Christians; Christians often have disagreements with those of other faiths; and Christians often have disagreements with those who are agnostics or atheists. The challenge is for Christians to act like -- and faithfully to be! -- Christians even when we disagree with others.

Here is a rule of thumb that might prove to be helpful to us in the midst of a disagreement.

Imagine that you are, or I am, getting ready to have a conversation with someone about a controversial subject. Call it a difficult discussion or a thorny talk. We should approach the talk with two guiding principles in mind.

First, we should always respect -- R-E-S-P-E-C-T! (thanks, Aretha Franklin) -- the humanity, the human dignity, of the person with whom we will be speaking. That is not a matter of how we feel about the person. That is not a matter of choice. That is not a matter for personal discernment. That is not a matter about which we must decide. We must show respect for the person with whom we will be talking. Period. No qualifications. No nuances. No questions asked. Even while we disagree with the other person.

Why is respect, for us, a given? Because "God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them." (Genesis 1:27, NRSV) In addition, respect is owed because Christ died for that person and that person's sins. Therefore, each person -- from the criminal to the saint, from the extravagantly gifted and talented to those mostly lacking natural advantages, from the brilliant to the clueless, from the virtuous to the vicious, from the one-percenters at the top to the one-percenters at the bottom, from the celebrity to the wannabe to the nobody, from the strong to the weak, from the senior to the unborn, from the palace queen to the village peasant -- is created in the image of God, is blessed by the saving grace of Christ's death, and is, therefore, worthy of respect from Christians.

Consider how such respect works out in an illustration from the realm of criminal law. A man is seen holding up a store in a suburban shopping mall. He is arrested and jailed by law-enforcement authorities. Federal and state laws demand that such authorities respect this suspect and his constitutional rights; such respect is based on the law's recognition of the Biblical understanding of the human person. In this example, federal and state officials are required to respect an alleged thief -- while the State (that is, the criminal-justice system) seeks justice for the accused (assuming innocence until proven guilty, plus just punishment if guilt is legally established), and the Church prays for the salvation of that person's soul.

This principle of respect causes Christians to object to media and political figures who refer to someone as "pure evil" or "an animal" -- even mass murderers or violent gang members. Such degradation through talk, by various leaders, can easily result in degradation by act.

Approaching a person for a difficult discussion, we should keep a second, guiding rule of thumb in mind. We must be willing to exercise our reason to the best of our ability to respond to what the other person is saying. While respecting the other person in the discussion, we must make thoughtful judgments about what that person says. We do not judge the person, but we judge the person's stated claims. Are the other person's comments good? Are they true? Or beautiful? Or bad? Or false? Or ugly? And we must thoughtfully put on the table the evidence, at our disposal, that backs up our evaluation.

For example, let's say that our partner in conversation claims, "Strong governments (authoritarian and totalitarian) establish the greatest social justice." (This is a very heavy conversation!) While respecting our partner, we might state that we disagree with that claim, and we would present the reasons why we disagree. We might draw on these lessons from history: communist and fascist governments routinely engage in genocide; they predictably mistreat minorities -- especially defenseless, powerless people; and they are unable to reform themselves.

There are times that Christians -- among themselves and with non-Christians -- must engage in thoughtful disagreements. That is not necessarily bad. It is a fact of Christian life. As such disagreements are engaged and unfold, Christians should always: (1) respect the persons with whom we are speaking, and (2) respond to the conversation that is offered, evaluate its claims, and disagree based on evidence. Conversations should never be occasions for people to be disrespected and false claims to be given a pass.

For Christians, disagreements are not out of bounds. They can actually be opportunities for learning, for training in virtue and holiness, and even for changing our minds.

In Christ,
Pastor Paul

THANK YOU, HEATHER

August 5, 2019 [email]

Paul,

My family and I have had several discussions, and I prayed about my positions with the church [Director of the Jane Wyche Schulken Handbell Choir and Director of Youth Ministries]. I've decided to not continue with my employment at this time. I've thoroughly enjoyed every experience and opportunity given to me and will always cherish the many relationships formed. The church and its members have always been very supportive of our family, and their love carried us through many hard times.

Thanks for your continued support!

Heather LaMora

August 9, 2019

Dear Heather,

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) was disappointed last night to receive the news of your stepping down from your church positions. But we were not surprised. For many months, you have driven great distances, from your home at the beach to Whiteville, to continue to lead the Youth and the Handbell Choir. We are so very grateful to God for you, for your faith, and for your many years of faithful service at the Whiteville United Methodist Church. Thank you!

And we do hope to see you, now and then, in the days to come.

Continue faithful, to Christ and His Church, for the sake of the world.

In Christ,

Mr. Rob Conway, SPRC Chair

Rev. Paul T. Stallworth, Pastor

AS THE CHURCH CHURNS

Exit-Plan Vote Voided

There was a recent, interesting development on the denominational scene. Not long ago, the Commission on General Conference determined that there were enough potentially invalid ballots to void the 2019 General Conference vote (402-400) that substituted a Minority Report exit plan (which spelled out requirements for a congregation to leave The United Methodist Church) for a Legislative Committee exit plan (which spelled out different requirements).

For your information, the possibly invalid ballots were created by people, who were first denied General Conference credentials to vote, and who later obtained such credentials and presumably

voted.

The Minority Report exit plan -- which, again, was approved by General Conference but later voided by the Commission on General Conference -- canceled a provision that exiting congregations would have to pay back grants that had been received from their Annual Conferences. Also, the Minority Report exit plan deleted a provision that bishops would be involved in setting the terms of congregations' departures and had conference Boards of Trustees taking the place of bishops in the process.

The Commission on General Conference then requested that the Council of Bishops ask the Judicial Council (that is, the United Methodist Supreme Court) to review, and decide, how this voiding of a General Conference vote affects the exit plan that was adopted last February. The Council of Bishops filed the request, and the Judicial Council agreed to review the case.

Because of this development, local churches desiring to leave The United Methodist Church (right now!) must negotiate with their Annual Conferences; or they may close as United Methodist churches, and then reopen as other churches.

New legislative petitions that establish a valid exit process, for congregations to leave The United Methodist Church, will most certainly be written before, and considered and acted on by, the 2020 General Conference in May.

Plans on the Table

Many United Methodists are now totally dedicated to "separation." (Methinks "division" is too strong and loaded a word to employ these days; so "separation" has become the softer, more acceptable term.) That is, they are dedicated to separating progressive/centrist United Methodists from traditionalist United Methodists to eliminate "fighting" at General Conference and throughout the larger church. (No fighting in the Church. History suggests that is a utopian dream. To be sure, we should all strive to engage in "disagree like Christians;" see above.)

Here are several of the plans that have been named and circulated in advance of General Conference 2020.

It can be assumed that there will be legislative petitions that would, if approved, reinforce the **Traditional Plan**, which was adopted by the 2019 General Conference and now stands as church doctrine and discipline. The Book of Discipline maintains traditional moral teaching and practice, and it seeks to hold the church's bishops and clergy accountable.

In July, Bishop David Bard and Bishop Scott Jones released the **Bard-Jones Plan**. It would create the Traditional Methodist Church, the Open Methodist Church, and the Progressive Methodist

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1st - Lindbergh Holden
Sylvia Walters
3rd - Sue Griffin Lennon
5th - Marsha Stallsworth
8th - Sara Brooks
Debbie Conway
10th - Heather LaMora
16th - Mitchell Williamson
17th - Shepherd Edwards
18th - Dan Biser
19th - Jim Rabon
24th - Suzanne Hall
John Nickolaus
27th - Chuck Wheeler

AVAILABLE FOR WORK
AROUND THE HOUSE

Herb Hoback
625-8916

LAY SERVANT MINISTRY COURSE:
"LEADING PRAYER"
Wesley Memorial UMC
Wilmington, NC
September 28/Saturday
Register on the Harbor District website.

DVD's AVAILABLE

The movies that have been shown in the Sunday Evening Film Series are available in the Church Office for viewing in your home. "God's Not Dead 2," "I Can Only Imagine," "Facing the Giants," "God's Not Dead 3: A Light in Darkness," "Miracles from Heaven," "The Case for Christ: The Film," and "Paul, Apostle of Christ," (all on DVD) may be checked out during office hours.

FREE BIBLE STUDY BOOKS AND GUIDES

I have left a few extra Bible study books and guides, including 1 & 2 Samuel and a truly excellent guide to C. S. Lewis' Mere Christianity, in the Church Office. Please feel free to take and use any or all for personal or group study; you do not need to return them. Wanda Diefes

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

September's OCC items: Flip flops or shoes, sunglasses, clothes, plastic shoeboxes. Remember the Shoe Box Dedication Sunday at WUMC is November 24.

THE CHANCEL CHOIR NEEDS YOU!

Rehearsal is on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. in the Choir Room. Just bring yourself, and the rest will happen naturally. All singing parts are needed. Whatever your vocal range, we have a place for you.

Also, the Jane Wyche Schulken Handbell Choir is looking to expand its membership to new ringers and regular substitute ringers. If you have ever played an instrument and/or read music, this would be a great opportunity to use those skills. Different size bells are available. One size does not have to fit all! Contact Gus Cothorn at wumcmusic@whitevilleumc.org, via text message at 910-770-2488, or leave a message at the Church Office.



Whiteville United
Methodist Church
902 Pinckney Street
Whiteville, NC 28472

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 38
WHITEVILLE, NC

Mrs. Kathy Graham, Administrative Assistant
Monday-Thursday/8:30 a.m.- 3:00 p.m.

Mr. Layton Dowless, Custodian
Monday-Friday/7:30-11:30 a.m.

Ms. Tammie Anderson, Treasurer
Friday/4:00-6:00 p.m. (or later)

Rev. Paul T. Stallworth, Pastor

Whiteville United Methodist Church
email: wumc@whitevilleumc.org
mail: 902 Pinckney Street/Whiteville, NC 28472
telephone: (910) 642-3376
website: www.whitevilleumc.org

The Whiteville United Methodist Church's Service of Worship is broadcast live on WTXY 1540 AM and 103.9 FM from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. on Sundays. Also it is available online at www.wtxy1540.com: click on "Click to Listen Live" under "United Methodist Church of Whiteville" at 10:00 a.m. to hear the complete audio of the service.

Mission Statement of Whiteville United Methodist Church
As people of the body of Christ, we will gather for and be strengthened by Word and Sacraments, participate in loving fellowship, grow in discipleship, and serve our community and the world in Christ's name.