

Community of Christ

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Eastern Great Lakes Mission Center

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“There are significant decisions that will be coming before the World Conference... that is always the case. One of the fundamental decisions that we have before us is how it is that we as members of the church will choose to relate to one another as we consider difficult issues. The world around us provides all sorts of examples of how people of diverse opinions choose to relate to each other, and most of those examples are not very healthy.

The question before us is, can we as Community of Christ relate to each other with civility and Christian charity, while at the same time being true to our strongly held beliefs and feelings and opinions? Can we share our self forthrightly and clearly and strongly while still doing that in a manner that is mutually respectful?

I want to suggest that Conference is not the time to begin practicing that kind of civility and Christian charity...the time to begin practicing...is with one another in our MCs and elsewhere as we...discuss these issues now.

A wonderful grace coming to the Conference could be if the persons attending the conference had had opportunity in their home jurisdictions to practice the grace of generosity and mutual love and care and listening and respect that is appropriate for God's people to model.

Some of these issues we will only sort through by the grace of the Holy Spirit. And so, it is really quite necessary for us to create climates in our inter-relational lives that are most amenable for the Holy Spirit's indwelling. Such environments tend to be fostered by mutual care and mutual respect. And so let us create opportunities for the Holy Spirit's ministry simply by the way we choose to talk with one another about issues that are difficult.”

These words, spoken by President David Schall, at the end of a recent gathering of World Church employees (in the Independence Temple and via webcast), are excellent words of counsel for all within the Community of Christ as we continue to grow into our call to be a prophetic people. They do not come with pre-conceived notions about how any particular issue will be resolved, nor are they intended to be used by persons on one side of an issue to demand the attention of those on the other side. Rather, they remind us that if we are to be the Community of Christ in more than name, we must be willing to approach one another with the same grace and generosity that God has shown to us in our own lives.

In recent months, as I have been engaging in the practice of Dwelling in the Word, I have been focusing on the passage in Matthew which tells of Jesus' baptism (Matt. 3:13-17), but I have been particularly captured the words of the verses leading up to the baptism in which John the Baptist addresses the Pharisees and Saducees as a “brood of vipers.” Isn't it just like us at times to think of those who would challenge our beliefs and opinions...those who would have the gall to disagree with us or see things a different way...as a “brood of vipers.” In order for us to experience the grace of which President Schall speaks, we must not fall into the “viper” trap. We must listen to one another in love and grace, refusing to judge or engage in name calling.

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As you may or may not be aware, at our recent mission center conference, we passed three resolutions that will be sent to the 2010 World Conference for consideration. A link to those resolutions can be found on the right side of our mission center website home page under "Recent Updates." We know from our own experience at that conference that we have by no means reached a consensus on the difficult issues before us as a church. Rather, we have found that even in the 56 out of 1100+ members of this mission center who attended the conference, we represent a diverse spectrum of thoughts and opinions and life experiences. This is perhaps both the blessing and the challenge of being a people open to the movement of God in our midst.

We were very pleased with the Spirit in which those gathered at the conference engaged in open dialogue. And, we recognize that there is still need for much more dialogue, prayer, study, listening and discernment. What we have expressed by our passing of resolutions at the mission center level is that we believe the issues to be of significant enough import that they need to be dealt with by the larger body of the church, rather than tabled or swept under the proverbial carpet. What we take upon ourselves as a result of passing the resolutions is a responsibility to be intentional about making the dialogue, prayer, study, listening and discernment a daily spiritual practice.

The Mission Center Presidency would like to encourage all members of the mission center to engage in any of a variety of dialogue opportunities, and is currently working on a plan to create such opportunities. We also strongly encourage individuals to engage this process in whatever ways are most appropriate for your own spiritual journey. Finally, we would encourage you to share your thoughts, and insights with those who have been elected to represent the MC as delegates to the World Conference. The link to the list of those delegates can also be found on the right side of the eglmc.org home page under "Recent Updates."

Of course, if you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the MC Presidency.

In Christ,



Blake Smith



Cindy Christian



Julie Deuble