

Kevin's Korner

We have much to be grateful for in this world and we are called to be stewards who protect, prosper and share all of God's good blessings.

First of all, I'd like to thank all of you who stayed for the Pastor's Cabinet meeting on Sunday! It's great to see First Christian Church excited and engaged in the present and future ministries of our church! Great ideas and wonderful discussion! Again, Thank You!

I do have a concern that I'd like to discuss and receive your thoughts and ideas about. Several weeks ago I made a comment in the worship service, which was understood by some as having a political intent. I believe that this was before the President announced that churches would no longer be punished for supporting political candidates or causes from the pulpit. But, more importantly, some of you pointed out to me that I could have communicated the same concern without using language that sounded political. I assure you that I appreciate those who gave me this guidance. I always want church members to communicate with me in this way, if you feel like I have spoken in any inappropriate manner. I do need your help to carry on this ministry!

But this situation has left me with an ongoing concern. There are actions being taken in our world and in our own nation, which are just plain wrong. Unfortunately, many of these actions are related to certain political agendas, and thus are considered inappropriate for discussion during official church proceedings. Some of these actions are clearly in opposition to the life and teachings of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. Still, these are considered inappropriate for discussion within the larger context of our church because of political differences.

First of all, I agree that, regardless of the President's authorization that the IRS will not prosecute churches for crossing the "partisan" line, I don't believe that there is a place for partisanship within the life of the church, unless great caution is taken to allow differing views to be openly presented (I wish there was a way that the church could encourage open discussions about the controversies of our world, within a truthful, loving and listening atmosphere). Secondly, I agree that it is difficult to determine "right or wrong" in actions that benefit some people, at the expense of others. Should we protect the interests of those closest to us at the expense of the interests of those far away (In distance, power, beliefs and practices, etc.)? Should we always protect those who can't protect themselves? Life is complicated! Relationships are complicated! Politics are very complicated! Even the "common good" is complicated (just ask the wolves and sharks)!

I meet monthly with a group of clergy who all serve some of the smaller mainline congregations in the valley. I find that they are asking the same questions of their congregations and sometimes receive different answers, from congregations and/or denominational leaders. I find it helpful to talk with others who understand the pressures and difficulties of pastoral ministry. But they cannot tell me the right way for First Christian Church to respond to difficult issues in our world.

Are there issues or actions in our community, state, nation or world, which justify or even demand a response from our church? Are there people, communities, animals or elements of this Earth, which demand some caring word or action from our church? Are there clear calls in our world for loving word or action, in order to share the gospel, hope, justice or freedom, in Jesus' name?

I'm telling you, this is hard on me! I carry a weight on my shoulders and a pain in my gut almost every day as I try my best to serve this congregation and the God of Jesus Christ, whom we all serve. Just last Sunday I had to lift up the people of Gaza, now "officially" suffering from famine. I also prayed for the leaders of the nations to find answers that might save thousands of lives, or more. I also prayed for these leaders to be honest and truthful, in a world where lying is just considered a necessary way of life.

I know that some of you are struggling with many of these same issues, in the world and right here in the church. I am called to be pastor for all of you, regardless of any partisanship or other differences. My only clear answer is to continually ask how I can be most loving and kind to each of you and also to everyone else whom I have the opportunity to meet. Love and kindness are both actions. I try to do my best. But I also want to do whatever I can to make loving kindness a reality for all people and all God's creation.

Will you join me in praying about this? I'd be glad to talk with you as well, especially if you have any concerns. Is there a time and place for church people to gather to pray and communicate with each other about such difficult issues, seeking a better way forward? We have much to be grateful for in this world and we are called to be stewards who protect, prosper and share all of God's good blessings.

Blessings!

Pastor Kevin