

January 9, 2010
Mission Statement Service

John 17:13,22-23,18
"Living as Christ's disciples within our hearts and beyond our doors"

In Lewis Carroll's wonderful story of "Alice in Wonderland" Alice comes to a fork in the road. She sees a Cheshire cat in a tree. Which road do I take? She asks. Where do you want to go? I don't know, Alice answered. Then, said the cat, "it doesn't matter."

According to the wisdom of Yogi Berra, "If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else."

The fictional story of Lewis Carroll and the humor of Yogi Berra both contain a universal truth. The importance of knowing where you are going.

King Solomon, purported to be the wisest of men, shares this wisdom in Proverbs (29:18) when he writes, "Without a vision the people will perish" It's essential that we always know where we are going. "If you don't... you'll end up someplace else."

My message today addresses the vision and mission of the church, and more specifically, our church... and where are we going. You'll recall, that last spring our church embarked on a journey of self awareness and study with the goal of developing a mission statement to guide us on our journey of faith...so we know where we are going.

We also wanted to make certain that it would be in alignment with Jesus vision and mission for our church. We began with a 6 week Bible study and sermon series that taught some of the basic precepts of our faith.

Through this study we identified the Vision and Mission of Jesus for his church. We used the scripture lessons read this morning from John 17. This was the high priestly prayer of Jesus that he prayed the night he was arrested before his trial and crucifixion. From this prayer, we learned Jesus prayed for us, literally, as the disciples of his resurrected ministry. It's a humbling thought to know that our Lord prayed for each of us, especially on this night. We were on his mind that momentous night because we were, and are, of upmost importance to Jesus.

Briefly, there are three foundations for his vision for us as his disciples. The first is the vision of our growing and being formed in the truth of God's love as revealed through Jesus. Jesus prays, "*Sanctify (purify, make Holy) them in truth; your word is truth*". (17:17) "*And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified(made Holy) in truth.*" (19)

The second is a vision of Joy as we focus our lives on the love that guided Jesus... even to the cross.

"But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves". (13)

I like Karl Barth's definition of Joy. He wrote, "Joy is the simplest form of gratitude" How appropriate as we reflect on our Savior's vision for his people and his church.

The third foundation is his vision of unity as we are united in the love of Jesus. *"I ask not only on behalf of these (disciples of his earthly ministry), but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, (us, the disciples of his resurrected ministry) that they may all be one."* (20-21) Jesus vision for us is to live in joy and unity to the glory of God.

His prayer also provides his mission for us. We are to live as followers of Jesus sent into the world, and to glorify God through our faith in Jesus.

"As you have sent me, so I have sent them into the world. (18)

Second, we are to live as witnesses to the presence and power of God's love as revealed through Jesus.

Our "mission" is to live as followers of Jesus sent into the world, and as witnesses to the love of God through Christ. Church's that live in the sending power of God's love, unite through a Divine vision...that calls them to a life together that is beyond the pettiness and grumblings that can sometimes undermine the spirit of a congregation. This Divine vision of Jesus leads to intentional ministry where mission defines the spirit of the congregation.

Jesus defines a Promised Land of Discipleship that is available to us now. It is important to understand that we do not have to wait until we leave

this earth to arrive in The Promised Land. Jesus prayed that we would enter into his Promised Land of discipleship...the land of living in Joy and Unity to the glory of God and being missioner's sent into the world as we journey together in faith.

Paul sums this up eloquently in his letter to the church in Philippi.

If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not {merely} look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus..." Phil 2:1-7

It's important to note Paul is teaching that the Promised Land for us now, can become a reality only when we have the attitude of Christ among us.

Now, as we looked at this scriptural understanding of the vision and mission of Jesus, we also needed to lift up a parallel teaching of our Savior. This comes from the Gospel of Mark and surrounds his calling of the disciples.

The first call of Jesus is familiar to us all. It's the story of how Jesus was walking beside the sea of Galilee, and he sees Simon and his brother

Andrew fishing. Jesus says, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of people.” And immediately, scripture tells us, they left their nets and followed him. He continues to walk along and also calls James and John.

These men understood the invitation to discipleship and of being called to be fishers of people. In the following years, the ministry of Jesus and his disciples was very powerful and many people welcomed his message of grace. Of course, at the same time, there were others who did not agree with his message...even to the point of calling for his crucifixion.

It is in Jesus understanding of what the future held for him, and the challenges the disciples were going to face as followers, that Jesus issued a second invitation to discipleship. *“Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it”.*

Notice that the essence of Jesus call did not change. It was the reality of what it meant to be a disciple that changed so dramatically. It’s one thing to leave your nets behind to follow Jesus. It is quite another to take up your cross and lose your life for Jesus sake and for the Gospel’s.

This second invitation envisions a life of faith that is beyond self interest. You may recall this is the biblical principle of Beyond and Within. This invitation defines discipleship taking us beyond our inward looking self

focused concerns, to looking outward beyond our doors to the needs of the world. Church's that understand these two calls of Jesus, and this principle, assess their ministries by how they are inviting people to be disciples of Jesus.

Understanding our call beyond self leads us to why the church exists. The sole reason we gather as Christ's church is captured in two scriptures; the Great Commission where Jesus tells us to make "*disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit*" and the second is in the Great Promise" in Acts 1. Here, Luke records, that Jesus teaches the purpose of power from the Holy Spirit is for Jesus' followers "*to be witnesses in Jerusalem and in all of Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth*".

So it is with these understandings that we began our process of defining our individual, and our church's, mission.

You may recall, that our Promised Land Task Force led us through this process.

This team began by organizing the bible studies where over 80 people participated. For those who did not participate, I preached sermons that reflected the weeks teaching.

This unique bible study asks the participants questions relevant to that weeks study. This information was captured and tabulated so the team could gain insight into what our congregation has experienced, its values and its

visions for the future. It also gave the team a snapshot of our congregation's culture.

Unlike the traditional way of using a small group of leaders' experiences and perceptions for input in developing its mission statement, the Promised Land taskforce gained the views of a significant segment of our active members. This was an invaluable voice in the teams work of developing a new mission statement.

Let me share some of the results with you.

1- 99.9 % felt that we are a praying church

2- 86% of the participants recognize that there are new expressions of ministry

3- 84% believe our church makes intentional choices about its ministries and mission

4- When asked about murmuring (OT/ Moses/ grumbling) in the church

57% felt it was not, or was minimally, detrimental to the church. 32% believed murmuring was somewhat detrimental

Only 11% believed it to be significantly detrimental.

5- 71% saw our church's ministry to be beyond its doors.

6- 85% believe current ministries invite people to see beyond self focused concerns.

In sum, we have a healthy church. Over the past years the church has nurtured its leadership and members in spiritual principles and actions. Our family of faith has learned many of the faith lessons that enable us to be a light on a hill, and relative to our community and world. PUMC is a good place to experience God and witness the presence and power of God's love as revealed through Jesus... and that's what we are called to do.

The resultant mission statement the team developed, and our council approved, to capture the essence of Jesus call to ministry for our church is on the front of your bulletin: "Living as Christ's disciples within our hearts and beyond our doors." "Living as Christ's disciples within our hearts and beyond our doors."

You'll notice immediately that it incorporates the biblical principle of "beyond and within" and that it is consistent with the vision and mission of Jesus. Living as Christ's disciples within our hearts means we will live in joy and unity to the glory of God. Living as Christ's disciples beyond our doors means we will go into the world as disciples of Jesus and be witnesses to the presence and power of God's love through Christ.

What does that mean to us today? What difference will it make in the way we live, and in the life of our church? It means that we have a story to

tell and a grace filled community of faith to share and...each of us needs to take an active role in our church's mission as we journey in faith.

We live as Christ's disciples within our hearts by being intentional about our own spiritual growth. John Wesley developed what he called the "Means of Grace" to guide us in our spiritual discipline.

These incorporate prayer, reading and studying of scripture, attending worship and partaking of Holy Communion. Living as Christ's disciples within our hearts requires that we be intentional about our spiritual growth.

We also live as Christ's disciples within our hearts by being intentionally engaged in nurturing our Body of Christ, so that it continues to grow in Joy and Unity making our church a place where God's love can be experienced.

We live as Christ's disciples beyond our doors by participating in the outreach ministries of the church... and by being invitational...inviting your friends and neighbors to experience God with us... by being in relationship with our community. Friends, God has blessed our community of faith for a purpose. It is not all about us... we are blessed to be a blessing. And... this is the primary lesson I believe we can learn from this process.

We have a community of faith that can be, that is poised, to be a significant witness to the love and grace of God to our community. Our church is a Spirit filled, grace filled body of Christ.

And we can't merely keep it for ourselves. Jesus calls us to share this blessing beyond our doors. In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus is very clear when he said, "*You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*" Matt 5:14-16

Our new mission statement is specifically designed to capture Jesus' vision and mission and to clearly show us where we are going.

It is also intentionally developed to be easy to remember, so that it can become a part of who we are and undergird all we do... so that every action we take, and every ministry we envision, can be tested against our stated mission.

Our mission statement gives us an actionable vision that is in alignment with Jesus vision and mission for his church... but in the end it all come down to this...Will you make a commitment to intentionally "Live as Christ's disciple within your heart and beyond our doors".

"Tale of Two Church's Story"

The work will continue as our leadership teams develop their ministry plans and resultant action plan. It is my prayer that this mission statement will become ingrained in us all and serve to clarify our purpose so that each of

us can enter into God's Promised Land of Discipleship... so that we can all live in joy and unity to the glory of God as Christ's followers sent into the world. Amen.