

From the Pastor

January 6, 2009

Discipline

Dear Friends,

Discipline in the church can be a touchy subject.

Many people, particularly parents of children, both young children and adolescents, feel defensive about the behavior of their children. It can be a reflection on their quality as parents. People feel offended when others voice disapproval. (I can remember when a woman bent down to our elder daughter and said “Oh you poor little baby. Your mother left you to go to work and leave you all alone.” My wife and I felt offended. The woman completely ignored the fact that we had hired another woman in the church to give care to our children. We felt hurt by this remark.) So we ought to refrain from saying things that could be interpreted as criticism.

Other kinds of discipline focus on the behavior of adults. Often, where members look for broad acceptance, people ignore unwelcome behavior. That might be living without discipline. But, as humans, we are not very good at ignoring things that seem different from our expectation. So we talk about it with our friends. Rather than engage in a conversation with the person, we complain to our friends and make generalizations about certain people or particular kinds of conduct.

My dear friends, we call this gossip. It is destructive and painful. It never leads to resolution, but further conflict and hurt feelings. Paul has some choice words about gossip, including that it is the work of the devil. . . . *they are not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say. . . Some have already*

turned away to follow Satan. [1 Timothy 5:13, 15] This is quite an indictment.

What does this have to do with discipline? Often gossip, in the form of criticism, pretends to be justified discipline. The one who voices the complaint makes the assumption that they are right and the object of their disapproval is wrong. They might even be correct, but they have robbed themselves and the other person of an opportunity. They reduced the person to an object instead of getting to know him or her as a person, loved by God. The potential for relationship has been destroyed. And the other person never has the opportunity to answer or explain the charge. Nor does that person get the benefit of learning a different behavior (if it is appropriate).

Gossip and criticism that does not face the criticized person, destroys fellowship, and makes room for other bad things to happen. Of the basic principles, one that makes America great is the fundamental right to face your accusers. Can the Church of Jesus Christ do anything less?

Instead, how would Jesus handle the situation? That might be the best way to handle things that make us uncomfortable. Secrets and things said behind peoples' back demean all of us. I pray that our church can be open enough for every issue to be faced openly and honestly. Then we can dismiss the unimportant and tackle the real needs of our church and our world.

Yes, discipline can be a good thing, if we follow the way of Christ. This might be a worthy New Year's goal for all of us.

Stretching toward our potential,

SERMON SCHEDULE for January 2008

Date	Scripture	Sermon
01/04/09	John 1:10-18	Becoming Children of God
01/11/09	Acts 19:1-7	Holy Spirit in our Church
01/18/09	John 1:43-51	Revelation and Witness
01/25/09	Mark 1:14-20	Radical Change

THANK YOU

Thank you for your generous gift to Kathleen and me at Christmas. When Lynda Dalla Pegorara stood up to make an announcement, I thought she was going to say something about our financial annual meeting. Instead, to my surprise, she asked Kathleen to join us at the pulpit!

I consider it a privilege to serve with you as your Pastor. God has given us a lot in terms of both material blessings and spiritual blessings. Our congregation does not have the self-centered outlook that marks some old and struggling churches. You have a spirit of care and love for each other that touched my heart from the very beginning. The gift you gave to us emphasizes the kindness of spirit that you have and show.

Again, thank you for all that you are and all that you do and all that you give. May God's love continue to wrap you with his peace and bring you joy in the New Year.

Tom and Kathleen

GOT STYLE?

Church Luncheon and Program

Sunday, January 18, after worship.

Please complete the survey handed out on Sunday morning, and bring it with you on the 18th. Rev. James Sinclair, our Area Minister, will lead us in understanding our style of sharing. The program will end by 2 p.m.

With the knowledge we receive, we will be able to find appropriate resources for growing as an inviting church. It is important that as many of us as possible take part, so our future planning can be more effective.

The program includes a luncheon and care for the younger children. Children not participating in the survey and program will be able to see a movie and have other activities after lunch.

RMMO

(Retired Ministers and Missionaries Thank You Offering)

Every year our church has done a special thing. We have reached into our wallets and pocketbooks to express our appreciation for the service that pastors and missionaries and denominational staff have given on our behalf.

The reality is that these individuals have worked for less than what they could receive in other settings. In retirement, they often struggle to make ends meet.

Our thank you offering helps those in retirement with a check. You may use the enclosed envelope to make your gift for people like Gage Hotaling and Don Morris. Thank YOU.

A 'WORD'
from the LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Our committee has met a couple of times in the past few months, and we want you to know that we are keenly aware of the need for solid plans to position our church for the future. The reality is, we need both plans and resources to carry those plans through. *Resources* might sound like another plea for money – but really it is about the people that will carry out the plans, and so our first report this year is aimed at preparing for what will undoubtedly be a busy, busy year.

HOW will we ever get things done if our mood is anything but harmonious, cooperative, respectful, and honest? Certainly some things will be accomplished, as they always have been, but if we work on our people-skills, the 'real' work (and there is plenty of it to go around) will be so much easier to complete. Sounds a bit like corporate jibber-jabber, but it really does make a difference.

-It's even referenced in the bible.

"Fire goes out for lack of fuel, and
tensions disappear when gossip stops"

(**Proverbs 26:20** TLB)

..so much more can be accomplished with less tension, don't
you think?

While our committee is focusing on the middle and long-range plans for our church, let us all endeavor to work on a goal for 2009 that will benefit us all for years to come.

*Let love guide your life, for then the
whole church will stay together in
perfect harmony.*

(**Colossians 3:14** LB)

Only then will we thrive and be able to 'grow' disciples – people who are, among other things:

- obedient to the will of God
- growing in their relationship with Jesus
 - displaying fruits of the Spirit
 - serving people
 - producing other disciples

--- isn't that our calling?

-Jennie Oyola & Jenny Flagg, co-chairs

Church Family & Friends

MOVIE NIGHT!

6:00 PM - January 31st

Davis Hall

Free Admission
Refreshment available

The wonderful movie *WALL-E* is featured.

BIBLE STUDY

2nd and 4th Mondays at 12:30 p.m.
in the Parlor.

We are looking at the Gospel of John. It is different from the other three gospels. It gives us a presentation of the ministry of Jesus Christ without hidden secrets or mysterious actions.

For John, we understand Jesus as the incarnation of God, from the beginning of his ministry. Jesus, the Word, is above all humans in so many ways. His power, his wisdom, his unwavering focus on what he would do, his intimate connection to “the father,” all demonstrate the unique place Jesus has among humans. There is no doubt about his divinity.

Come join us as we share the special gifts of this gospel. Bring a sandwich, and we will have a hot beverage for you. In January, we meet on the 12th and the 26th.

Everyone is welcome.

MISSIONworks 2009

Be astounded! (Habakkuk 1:5)

Yes, the best missions conference is coming again to Fitchburg, Massachusetts March 6-7.

Inspiring **speakers** like Karen Smith and Denton Lotz, **workshop** leaders like Don Bradley and Gary Ludwig, mission presenters like Brian McLatchy and Howard McLendon, and a **music** leader like Patrick Evans will make the weekend very special. Anyone who attended before can tell you of the very special experience that we always have when we go to this conference. See members of the Missions Committee and others.

The registration is \$10 for Friday evening and \$35 for Saturday. The buffet on Friday night is \$20. (The Saturday banquet at noon is included in the registration.) Breakfast is a continental buffet in the large hall.

There is also a youth program connected to this conference that includes the brand new water park.

The emphasis will be on our continuing focus on Ghana and the future signature project in Tibet. There are exciting opportunities in the future!

If you have any inclination to go, please speak with Melissa Pidgeon or Nancy Daniels or any of our Missions Committee members. Tom Rice also has information and we will have registration sheets available.

Come! Hear the stories! Be astounded! Commit yourself to personal involvement with God’s work at home and abroad. This is what Jesus calls us to do.