A Note from Pastor Craig

Greetings! Another Minnesota summer month has come and gone. And what a month August was - some sunshine, but soggy, soggy, soggy!

Last month I wrote about church members being accepting and non-judgmental toward each other in light of our differing religious beliefs. Some of you contacted me expressing your gratitude for articulating what you believe to be an important value in congregations. Others expressed your concern, wondering at what point diversity leads to a church losing core United Methodist beliefs regarding the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Thank you for your feedback.

Last month’s “Note from Pastor Craig,” highlighting the importance of diversity, was conceived then as the first of two parts. This month I’m writing about the necessity of unity in congregations, which is what Paul Harvey would call “the rest of the story.”

Unity and diversity are two necessary sides of the same coin; they complement and strengthen each other. Unity without diversity limits what the Holy Spirit can do in churches and in the world, and suggests that members, liberal or conservative, who are different from most of church members are not welcome. Diversity without unity can splinter a congregation into groups and threaten its mission. (For my reflection on one aspect of how unity and diversity have played out in our nation’s history see the extended footnote on the next page.)

Neither unity nor diversity exist for their own sake; both exist to further a church’s mission. In our case at Alexandria United Methodist Church, this means to make disciples/followers of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Although there are other “benefits” to being part of our church, the reason we exist is to further our mission.

The Minnesota Annual Conference has established three gospel imperatives for Minnesota United Methodist congregations, which are avenues to advance our mission:

- Grow in Love for God and Neighbor
- Reach new people
- Heal a broken world

Although our congregation is working hard at Growing in Love for God and Neighbor and making some efforts at Healing a Broken World, we’ll want to keep improving at both in the months and years ahead.

We presently don’t have any program in place or direction for how to Reach New People. In my view, this is the biggest challenge our church faces. Any congregation, regardless of denomination, theology, location, or size, which does not reach new people will be five percent smaller and older each year. Its financial stability will also steadily decrease.

So…… the long and the short of the last two months’ Pastor Pages. How can the diversity of our church and our acceptance of each other promote our unity so we can better fulfill our mission? In these two Pastor Pages, I’ve mentioned organizational reasons for unity and diversity. In a future newsletter, I’ll revisit this topic from a theological angle.

I hope you have a blessed September!

Pastor Craig
A Note from Pastor Craig Continued…

FOOTNOTE: I make the following observation as an enthusiastic, yet untrained and amateur observer of American history.

In 1781, following the Revolutionary War, the thirteen former colonies (now states!) ratified the Articles of Confederation. This was our country’s first attempt to bring some organization, order, and cohesion to our new nation, which stretched from New England all the way to Georgia, and encompassed a vast diversity (for the time) of religious, social, and political outlook and practice.

The Articles were not able to bring about a union of states, however, because they didn’t provide enough power to a centralized federal government. Our present Constitution, ratified in 1789, did just that with amount of governing power granted to the three separate federal branches of government – executive, legislative, and judicial. The tenth amendment to the Constitution ensured that diversity represented in different regions would be honored; however, with the cherished words: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

Yet seventy plus years later as the Civil War raged, the United States of America wasn’t all that united. Rather states and regions still functioned as their own domains of a sort. The following extended quotation, written by James McPherson, is from the preface to Margaret Leech’s Pulitzer Prize winning Reveille in Washington: 1860 – 1865, an account of Washington D.C.’s metamorphosis during the Civil War.

America’s awakening as a modern nation came during the Civil War. Before 1861 many Americans looked upon their Union as a voluntary association of states that could assert their separate sovereignty whenever they wanted to. But the events of 1861 – 1865 upended this notion and made Washington the sovereign capital in fact as well as name. Before the war the words “United States” were generally understood as a plural noun: The United States are a republic. After 1865 “United States” became a singular noun. The North went to war to preserve the Union; it ended by creating a nation. In Lincoln’s first inaugural address he used the word “Union” twenty times and never said the word “nation.” In his first message to Congress, on July 4, 1861 he referred to the Union thirty-two times and to the nation three times. But more than two years later, at Gettysburg, Lincoln did not refer to the Union at all but spoke of the nation five times as he invoked a new birth of freedom to forge a new American nationalism. And in his second inaugural address, looking back over four years of war, Lincoln described one side as seeking to dissolve the Union in 1861 and the other as accepting the challenge of war to sustain the nation. (Leech, p. viii. Italics in original text.)

Since then our nation, at its best, has balanced the necessity of both unity and diversity. These are the times when we have lived by our motto: “E Pluribus Unum – Out of many, one.”

Yet there have been times in the name of unity when minority ethnicities, voices, and movements have been ignored, dismissed, or even silenced. This possibility, whether from the right or from the left, and the punishing of dissent is never far away when we do not honor the diversity present in our country. There have been other times when one group, movement, or philosophy believes its vision/way forward deserves to be the policy for the entire nation. A group’s passion for their ideals/cause can blind them to other “colonies of diversity,” to the shortcomings in their perspective, and to our national identity.

Maintaining unity amidst diversity is a balancing act, which requires constant and diligent attention.
**Worship Attendance**

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**Office Hours**

Pastor Craig — M-W-F (9:00-1:00)  
T-Thurs (9:00-1:00)  
Kali — Mon-Tue-Wed-Thurs-Fri  
Office is open (9:00-1:00)  
Kayla—Tuesday (8:00-4:00)  
Alternate Thurs/Fri (8:00-4:00)  
Brenda—Wed & Thurs (5:30-8:30)

CARE TEAM VISITORS are available to provide personal support to church members in times of special need. These may include hospitalization, rehabilitation, family crisis, or senior home visitation. The CARE TEAM is a compassionate, volunteer ministry of our congregation. Call the church office to request a visit (763-4624).

**Publication Date for the next Messenger:**

is the last week of September. Articles for the October issue need to be in the office by NOON on Wednesday, September 20th.

Reminder that we are following our Safe Sanctuary Policy—the church entrance doors will remain locked unless there are two people present in the building. Please call ahead before you come to church, as there are times when we are not in the building, even though we are working. Also, most days someone is in the office before 9:00 and later than 1:00 p.m.
Nursery is available on Sunday morning during worship services and coffee fellowship time. Nursery is for children 5 and younger. If you have an older child and need a place to go with them during worship time, the Youth Room is available. There is a speaker in the room to listen to the sermon. Also toys are available in Cart Two.

Thank you to all who have dropped off their used ink cartridges. We have an abundance of ink cartridges and do not need anymore at this time. Thank you!

**Parish News**

Congratulations to Matthew and Abigail on their recent marriage on August 19th!

Luverne Adams will celebrate her 95th birthday on September 3rd.

Rudy Nelson will celebrate his 85th birthday on September 5th.

Barb Malvin will celebrate her 85th birthday on September 15th.

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**Acolytes: Did you Know:** Acolytes have been part of the church in one form or another for nearly 2,000 years. The word *acolyte* comes from the Greek word *akolouthos*, meaning follower, a helper or assistant. In the early church acolytes were a clerical order. Acolytes carry into worship the light, processional cross, banners, or Bible and assist the pastor with communion, baptism and other duties. Children and youth often serve as acolytes, but adults can serve as well.

“Jesus said: I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). The presence of the light reminds us of Jesus coming into our world and into our lives. The light is carried into the worship service as a symbol of Jesus coming into the presence of the worshiping community.

Many congregations use two candles on the altar to point out that Jesus was both a human being and God. At the end of the service the light is carried out into the world to show that Jesus Christ is for all people everywhere. This symbolizes the light of Jesus Christ going out into the world where believers are to serve.
In honor of going back to school, we will pray a special blessing over students (and their backpacks), asking God to guide, protect, and nurture them this year. Students of ALL ages are invited to bring their backpacks with them to church on Sunday, September 10th for this special event.

Blessing of the Backpacks is a wonderful way to acknowledge the beginning of a new school year and recognize the importance of learning. We also want our students to know that God is with them at school and that their church cares and supports them all week long.

After the blessing, students will receive a special tag to place on their backpack to remind them that their church family will be praying for them throughout the year.

We are still using Deep Blue Kids curriculum, but switching from a Classroom model to a Large Group/Small Group model. We are looking for adults and youth to serve as Small Group Leaders and Assistants! Leaders are responsible for preparing and leading the small groups activity and the assistants are responsible for helping the leader and children in the classroom. Storytelling, music, offering and prayer will all be done as a large group. Please contact Kayla Brunkow, Director of Children’s Ministries, if you have any questions or interest in serving in Sunday school. We are hoping to have 3 leaders for each small group so you would only have to lead one Sunday (occasionally two) per month.

Sunday school begins on September 10th for all children age 3 through 5th grade. It will be held weekly from 9:15AM-10:15AM. Registration forms are available in the Narthex and on the church website. Please complete one form per child and turn it in as soon as possible.

During the 2017-2018 school year we will have regular Wednesday night activities for all students in 3rd - 5th Grade. We will begin the evening with a meal at 5:30PM followed by activities until 7:30PM. We will begin meeting on Wednesday, September 13th and start the year with our Learning To Use My Bible class. This class encourages children to take an interest in the Bible by using a hands on approach to teach basic Bible skills. It not only introduces them to the Bible, but builds on what they have learned before.

3-year-old & 3rd grade Presentation of Bibles will take place at both worship services on September 10th.
On August 2-3, nine youth and two adults went to the Twin Cities for our Mission Trip. We served meals at the Simpson Shelter and the House of Charity Food Center as well as saw some sights. We toured the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis, Wesley Historic Center and the Minneapolis Institute of Art. Thank you to the entire congregation for their support of this and future Mission Trips and Projects.

2017 Mission Trip to the Twin Cities

Pictured (left to right): Lexi Dirkes, Rachel Wallerich, Allea Balcome, Noah Dirkes, Jacob Balcome, Logan Tung, Caris Pass, Grace Evink, Brooke Stender

If you haven’t signed up for Remind make sure you do! We will be using the Remind system to send out weekly reminders about Confirmation and Youth Group. Information on how to sign up is on the bulletin board in the Narthex or contact Brenda Thomson.

We would love to have more people following our adventures!! If you have liked the page, great! Suggest it to you friends!!
https://www.facebook.com/alexumcyouthministries/

The Youth Group will be holding a Pizza Fundraiser on October 1st after second service. Pizzas will be made in the Community Bread Oven. More information will be coming in the near future.
This fall there will be two adult Sunday school classes taking place simultaneously on Sunday mornings. In offering two different classes, it is the hope of the Adult Discipleship and Spiritual Formation Team that we will reach out to all adults regardless of where we are in our faith journey. The two studies starting this fall are:

**Embracing An Alternate Orthodoxy: The Legacy of Saint Francis:** by Fr. Richard Rohr. Richard Rohr is a Franciscan Priest of the New Mexico Province and founder of the “Center for Action and Contemplation.” He is a globally recognized ecumenical teacher; bearing witness to the universal awaking within Christian mysticism and perennial tradition. His teaching is grounded in the Franciscan Alternative Orthodoxy – practices of contemplation and self-emptying, expressing itself in radical compassion, particularly for the social marginalized. He is the Academic Dean of the Living School for Action and Contemplation and the author of numerous books. This is a 5 to 10 week DVD study exploring five topics central to Franciscan Theology and Practice:

1) Atonement Theory;
2) Eco-spirituality;
3) The Christ who existed before Christianity;
4) Orthopraxy vs. Verbal Orthodoxy (living like Jesus); and
5) Mysticism over Moralism.

**Ask: Faith Questions in a Skeptical Age:** by Bishop Scott J. Jones and Reverend Arthur D. Jones. Scott Jones is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church. Prior to being elected to the Episcopacy, he served churches in Texas and was the Associate Professor of Evangelism at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University where he taught courses on Evangelism and Wesley studies. He was elected to the Episcopacy in 2004 and assigned to serve as resident Bishop of the Great Plains Episcopal Area. On September 1st of this year, he will be assigned as Bishop of the Texas Annual Conference. His son, Arthur Jones, is the founding pastor of “The Well Plano” a congregation within St. Andrews United Methodist Church in Plano, Texas. This is an 8 week book and DVD study that addresses hard questions that all of us face when considering faith, religion and the church. The questions include:

1) Can only one religion be true;
2) Why is there suffering and evil;
3) How can I believe in science and creation;
4) How can I believe in a God I can’t prove;
5) Can I trust the Old testament;
6) Are marriage, sex and family life religious issues;
7) Was Jesus’ resurrection real; and
8) Why do Christians disagree about so many things.
# SEPTEMBER VOLUNTEERS

### Liturgists:
- **8:00** September 3: Roy Good  
  September 10, 17 & 24: Roy Good
- **9:30/10:30** September 3: Kim Tryggeseth  
  September 10, 17 & 24: Megan Burkhammer

### Ushers:
- **8:00** September 3: Pat Vickerman, Carol Meyer, Chuck Bollen  
  September 10, 17 & 24: Pat Vickerman, Bev Vikander, Chuck Bollen

### Greeters:
- **September 3** 8:00: Ron & Kathy Reiber  
  9:30: Bruce Jordan
- **September 10** 8:00: Roy & Connie Good  
  10:30: Mitch, Kali & Akeley Kaeter
- **September 17** 8:00: Darren & Tess Evink  
  10:30: Virginia Ketter
- **September 24** 8:00: Dave & Karen Morgan  
  10:30: Duane & Lois Bonde

### Coffee Servers:
- **September 3** Labor Day: Megan Burkhamer; Brad & Jackie Vogt
- **September 10** Labor Day: Rollie & Kay Kortlever; Bob & Jackie Olson
- **September 24** Labor Day: Steve & Marsha Haugen; Dave & Lynn Nelson

### Organists/Pianists:
- September 3: Lonnie Kriel
- September 10: Allie Prestby
- September 17: Allie Prestby
- September 24: Gale Maxwell

### Nursery Workers:
- **September 3 & 17** — Alex Anderson
- **September 10 & 24** — Karen Murphy

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**September Birthdays**

1. Vivian Mohawk
2. Ivdelle Carlson  
   Gaye Mounsdon
3. Luverne Adams  
   Joey VanRoekel
4. Warren Stefanski
5. Nancy Christensen  
   Bryce Mogler  
   Rudy Nelson
6. Mike Bartell  
   Barb Larson
7. Carolyn Carlson
8. Mark Gerdes
9. William Schroeder
10. Richard Carlson
11. Catherine Mogler  
    Christian Doumbia  
    Elijah Doumbia
12. Bill Malvin
13. Evan Gettel  
    Sharon Holm  
    Barb Malvin
14. Dan Foster
15. Sue Helgeson  
    Alice Seiler  
    Pat Vickerman
16. Bryan Balcome  
    Jeanne Miller
17. Jim Gratias
18. Nathan Pring
19. Tom Roos  
    Aidan Staples
20. Phillip Golde  
    Julie Schmidt
21. Anthony Reed  
    Darlene Lunemann
22. Tess Evink  
    Sue Merten  
    Chad Stender  
    Owen Oehlert
23. Allen VanRoekel
24. Justin Cummins  
    Justin Koehn  
    Steve O’Brien
25. Lucie Battey
26. Tara DeWitt  
    Julie Shaughnessy
COMMUNITY EVENTS
Thursday, September 7th, 2017 at 3:15 PM there will be a Fall Season Kick-off for Senior College of West Central Minnesota will be held in the Auditorium at the Alexandria Technical and Community College. There is no charge for this Kick-off. For more information, please see poster on Announcement Board.

Saturday, September 16th, 2017 at 10:00 AM—1:30 PM there will be a Scandinavian Fall Festival Benefit at Calvary Lutheran Church. There will be a Swedish Meatball & Salad Luncheon. Adults—$8, Children under 12—$4.

Fall Rummage Sale: The Annual Fall Rummage Sale will be held Saturday, October 7th. Now might be a good time to start gathering items to donate for the sale. Bring those items to the church beginning Wednesday, October 4th. More information will be provided in the October Messenger. If you have questions please contact Sue Rishavy or Sally Vano.

Alexandria United Methodist Church
Please join us on September 10, 2017, from 11:30—2:00 for food, music, games and fun, to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Alexandria United Methodist Church.
This will be in conjunction to the first day of Sunday School.
Please RSVP in the Narthex or email the office at office@alexumc.org

Celebrating 150 years
1867-2017
Sugar Raises your Depression Risk

Foods have an immense impact on your brain, and eating whole foods is the best way to support both your physical and mental health. Based on the evidence, avoiding sugar (particularly fructose) is an important prevention and treatment strategy for anxiety and depression, both of which are rising in prevalence.

A number of studies have linked high-sugar diets to a higher risk of depression. Most recently, men consuming more than 67 grams of sugar per day were found to be 23 percent more likely to develop anxiety or depression over the course of five years compared to those whose sugar consumption was less than 40 grams per day.

Several other studies have also identified mechanisms by which excessive sugar consumption can wreak havoc with your mental health. For example, eating excessive amounts of sugar:

- **Contributes to insulin and leptin resistance** and impaired signaling, which play a significant role in mental health.

- **Suppresses activity of brain derived neurotrophic factor** a key growth hormone that promotes healthy brain neurons. These levels tend to be critically low in both depression and schizophrenia.

- **Affects dopamine**, a neurotransmitter that fuels your brain’s reward system (hence sugar's addictive potential) and is known to play a role in mood disorders.

- **Damages your mitochondria**, which can have body-wide effects. Your mitochondria generate the vast majority of the energy (ATP) in your body. As your mitochondria are damaged, the energy currency in your body declines and your brain will struggle to work properly. Fats are critical for the health of cellular membranes and many other biological functions, including and especially the functioning of your brain.

- **Promotes chronic inflammation** which, in the long term, disrupts the normal functioning of your immune system, thereby raising your risk of depression.

This study also concluded that dietary predictors of depression are similar to those for diabetes and heart disease. One of the hallmarks of these diseases is chronic inflammation, of which sugar is a primary driver. So, excessive amounts of sugar can truly set off an avalanche of negative health events — both physical and mental.

The consensus currently is that a modified Mediterranean Diet (a variety of fresh whole foods of organic vegetables & fruits, with the occasional wild caught fish, organic free-range poultry, pastured pork, grass-fed & grass-finished beef) is the best diet for all around good health. No grains, no dairy, no refined sugars. Special interests have driven the food market far too long and health has been sacrificed for convenience. Our mental and physical health is at stake now and the need to change our eating habits is here. Our bodies are much more complex than ever thought and the interaction with the environment is a part we are just beginning to recognize. Taken in part from Dr. Joseph Mercola.com
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<td>6:30 Education Meeting</td>
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<td>Pastor Gone for Advisory Meeting</td>
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