

In the last line of the mission statement of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, there is a phrase that I really wish that every church could capture. It says that one of the goals of their mission is . . . “to be a winsome and exemplary community of God’s people.”

It is my hope that all of us here at Las Placitas Presbyterian Church also seek to fashion a winsome and exemplary community of God’s people as we seek to live according to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Now, of course, being winsome and exemplary does *not* mean being happy all the time; instead, an exemplary Christian community will stand up for justice when there is oppression . . . and we will lament and advocate for healing when there is disease or a pandemic . . . and we will rejoice when there are occasions for joy . . . and we will seek reconciliation when wounds have been inflicted.

In fact, reconciliation is one of the hallmarks of the Christian faith. Paul writes in Second Corinthians that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19).

According to Paul, we Christians are now entrusted with sharing, and embodying, the message of reconciliation . . . and as my former theology professor, Shirley Guthrie, wrote in his book, “The New Testament makes this unmistakably clear: There is no such thing as reconciliation with God without reconciliation with our fellow human beings. Hostility and ill will toward them – *any* of them – is also hostility and ill will toward God.

Peace with God always means peace also with them – *all* of them” (Christian Doctrine, page 267). As a result, for the next couple of Sundays, we’ll be exploring a couple of passages from the New Testament that focus on reconciliation. I hope that we’ll all be able to gather together (at 8:30 a.m. or 10:30 a.m.) as we examine the words of Jesus.

May God’s grace surround you as we serve as a winsome and exemplary community of God’s people.