

INTRODUCTION: As CLC is unified around our mission to reach, care, and build people for Christ, the Christ-exalting impact will be eternal.

Ephesians 4:3 *"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."*

I. Our Ministry Theme this Year: "Unified"

- There is incredible power in teamwork. Helen Keller: *"Alone we can do little; together we can do so much."*
- The Kingdom of God is all about team – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Nothing beats teamwork!
- Philippians 1:27 (NLT) *"I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News."*
- Teamwork is messy, because it involves people, and the more people involved, the messier it can become.
- Three enemies of teamwork:
 - I become a lone ranger. "It's so much easier to do it myself"
 - I become a blocker, one who can be a perpetual critic and opposed to change.
 - I become a "Me-Monster," self-absorbed finding it difficult to trust and believe in others.

DISCUSSION:

- A. Have you ever been part of a great team? What made it great?
- B. How have you experienced the enemies of teamwork?

II. Biblical Guidelines for Unity Amid Differences

A. Let's Avoid Gossiping

The Greek word translated "gossip" means to *whisper*. Whispering behind someone's back operates in the dark. While stroking one's ego, it is very damaging to our unity.

Proverbs 26:20 *"Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down."*

- B. Let's identify evidences of grace and speak them to each other and about each other.

The church in Corinth was deeply flawed, yet Paul writes, *"I thank God for you because of the grace given you in Christ Jesus..."* (1 Cor. 1:4) Each on our staff is flawed, yet a work of grace. To see grace and speak that grace honors Christ and keeps criticism in perspective.

- C. Let's speak criticism directly to each other if we feel the need to speak to others about it.

We will not always agree on everything. *Romans 12:18 "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."* It may not be possible, but we keep trying!

D. Let's look for, and assume, the best motives in other's viewpoints, especially when we disagree.

When Paul dealt with disagreements in Romans 14, he appealed to those with opposite practical conviction to have identical heart-motives. *Romans 14:6* "He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God." Christ honoring passions can unite us in spite of differences.

E. Let's focus often on the magnificent things we hold in common.

Our mutual faith and our common goal to "make disciples of all nations" holds us together and keeps us pulling in the same direction. *Ephesians 4:3* "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all who is over all and in all."

F. Let's be more amazed that we are forgiven than that we are always right.

Our staff relationships must be formed by the grace of the Gospel. "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you ... And walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us." (*Eph. 4:32 – 5:2*) As Jesus said to the woman who anointed his feet in *Luke 7:47*, "I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – for she loved much. But the one who has been forgiven little loves little."

G. Let's work on life-together at CLC with a common unified vision.

1 Corinthians 14:8 "If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?" As a team of leaders, we talk, debate (sometimes even argue), and refine our positions until we reach as large a consensus as we can on major issues. Over time, we evaluate and refine our ministry approach to even more strategically carry out our mission. Sometimes, we must recognize that the decisions made may not perfectly satisfy our preferences. Yet, we resolve to support the consensus for the greater good to effectively reach, care, and build people toward maturity in Christ.

DISCUSSION:

1. Of the seven "Let's" mentioned above, which one is most challenging for you?
2. In our current multisite structure, how might we more positively develop and celebrate unity in our congregation?