

“Choose Your aWay Team” – Rev. Peter Paige 10-22-17

Matthew 9:37-38; 10:40-42

37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”⁴⁰ “Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 41 Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. 42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.”

Luke 10:1-5

1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. 2 He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. 3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. 4 Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. 5 “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’

We make vows when we profess our faith and join a church: We promise to:

- 1) Renounce wickedness, Reject evil powers, Repent of our sin, Resist evil, injustice, and oppression.
- 2) To remain faithful members of Christ’s holy church and serve as Christ’s representatives in the world & to receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old & New Testaments.
- 4) “To **confess** Jesus Christ as Savior, put our whole **trust** in his grace, and promise to **serve** him as Lord.”
- 5) It’s always been about Choice. We choose God’s way, we choose to use God’s way, to trust God’s way, and we choose whether or not we represent that we have chosen to use and trust God’s way. These vows and commitments we hold in common with most of the world’s Christian churches.
- 6) Today I want to talk about the vows we make to the United Methodist Church...the metaphor I’m using is choosing your away team.

Away team – it’s either the sport’s team that is on the road or a star trek reference...

In sports an away team usually has less fans in the stadium, and therefore less of an advantage.

The TV and movie Star Trek away team is the group assembled to go on missions to the surface of a planet or another spaceship. Usually you’ve got the captain, the doctor, and science officer – and at least one ‘red shirt’...[more said]

7) We have discussed the vows and commitments that we hold in common with most of the world’s churches. Now, let us turn our attention to commitments that pertain particularly to our calling as United Methodists and as members of a local church. The fifth vows address these concerns. VOWS THAT RELATE TO OUR PARTICULAR CALLINGS to Serve As United Methodists - “To be loyal to Christ through The United Methodist Church and do all in their power to strengthen its ministries.” This changed in 2008 recognizing our loyalty to Christ is primary and not to the church!

The Christian faith is embodied in a wide variety of churches and fellowships. Each witnesses to the truth as they have known it in Jesus Christ, and each seeks to serve the one God in the power of the Holy Spirit. Each reflects a response to the admonition of St. Paul who wrote,

“...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2: 12-13). Each denomination bears its particular gifts and calling on behalf of the greater church and the world. As with individuals, so it is with the churches: God gives grace to each, yet none is perfect. Thus it is important for churches to converse with each other, to study and pray together. I have learned valuable lessons about worship from my friends in the other denominations. I have learned about baptism and the disciplines of Christian initiation from my sisters and brothers in the Catholic Church, and from my Baptist, Mennonite, and Lutheran colleagues. Besides my numerous United Methodist mentors, I learned much about preaching from a wise Pentecostal teacher.

8) Nevertheless, one cannot be a member of several different churches. When we are United Methodists, and we serve Christ through this church. This particular identity is part of the gift that we offer the other Christian denominations. When we promise loyalty to Christ through The United Methodist Church we are not saying that ours is the best church or that we have exclusive theological insights. Nor are we saying that everybody in our neighborhood ought to become a United Methodist. We are happy when people join our fellowship, but we should be equally happy when someone answers God’s call to serve faithfully elsewhere. When anyone joins here, we acknowledge that The United Methodist Church is the best place for us to live out our commitment to Jesus Christ. It acknowledges God’s particular call on our lives to a particular way of being church.

9) To live as a disciple of Jesus Christ through The United Methodist Church means that we support our connectional system of ordering ministry and mission. We do not view ourselves as a loosely related association of local congregations, but rather as one church manifested in a variety of contexts.

10) This unity does not mean that all of our churches should look exactly the same. We do, however, believe that there is a unifying center in Jesus Christ, in our understanding of God’s grace and the shape of the church. We are connectional for the sake of mission to the community and the world, to the end that we and others are formed as disciples of Jesus Christ. As a part of this branch of Christ’s church, I will study its history and heritage, doing my best to understand and embody its particular understanding of God’s grace and mercy, as well as its understanding of accountability. I will learn about John Wesley’s theology and his practices for making disciples. I will learn the hymns of Charles Wesley. As a United Methodist, I will study the church’s doctrinal commitments and wrestle with its Social Principles. I will use the church’s approved liturgical rites. I will seek constant communion, and when I serve that communion I will use grape juice in the cup until the church decides otherwise. I may not agree with all of our church’s positions, but when I disagree I will do so respectfully and I will use the established channels for change. For the sake of Christ and the Gospel, I will do all that I can to strengthen the ministries of The United Methodist Church and help them flourish.