

## Prayer Triad #2

Scripture Reading: Philippians 2: 1-13

**Scripture Question: What thoughts does this scripture elicit from us about our relationships with each other in the church?**

*Discussion from the triads:*

- *We need to treat our neighbors as ourselves.*
- *We think our church cares about each other – both our church family and members of the community. We do not do things for personal gain but for the love of our neighbor.*
- *Do we have conflict in the church? Questioning is a normal part of the process.*
- *Christians are called to be sympathetic, to share in another's sorrow and not to be concerned with personal gain. Are we really sharing in our fellow congregational members' sorrow during times of loss? Are we sympathetic to each other? Some personal experiences seem to indicate that we aren't expressing sympathy or empathy during times of need. It is felt that the leadership (Elders and Deacons) of the church has the added responsibility (fair or unfair) of being there for people during times of need. But is the leadership of the church aware of its responsibilities? Are these responsibilities articulated to those leaders? Perhaps more education on what is expected of Elders and Deacons would help.*
- *All talents in the church should be considered to be equal. We should be bound together with respect and love, tolerant of others' understanding and interpretation of the scripture. We should not be judgmental, but we should be friendly. There are many old relationships within the congregation, but those do not exclude making friends with new people.*

**Question 1: Do we have clear, open, healthy communication channels in our congregation?**

- *Communication sometimes falls short. For example – the recent changes to the musical program not fully communicated to all involved leading to a misunderstanding and the loss of a talented pianist.*
- *There is always room for improvement. We would like to see better communication between the decision-making committees and the congregation. We would like to note that our minister is very approachable and accessible – always involved in church activities. There have been occasional miscommunications and misinterpretations which we would certainly like to AVOID in the future.*
- *Yes there is good communication. Not perfect, but as good as in other churches.*
- *We need better communication at times. Everyone should be included in decisions when their committee or group is involved in something.*
- *We don't have sick communication, but it's not purely healthy either. Some might feel excluded in Bethany because using the "invitation" mode could cause some in the congregation to feel left out if they don't receive that invitation. We don't need to assume how others feel, but ask everyone. Members need to go the extra step to communicate with one another by calling, texting or emailing others. Though face-to-face contact may be better for some, social media contact is a good way to keep in touch with others and to help folks keep a check on each others' spiritual health. The Alert Now format is a great way to let people know what is going on in the church. Would there be a way to send this to people who aren't members or regular attendees? Could we have a request form in the pew back so people could elect to get Alert Now messages?*

- *Sometimes we keep too much to ourselves. Having the greeting time back in the service would be a good idea and people should be encouraged to move around and greet others during this time. We should reach out to others in both good times and difficult times.*
- *Bethany used to have a Pastoral Relations Committee. This committee could be a great tool to ensure that the minister is happy with the congregation and vice versa. We don't feel that, on the whole, Bethany has clear communication channels.*
- *We could communicate better within the congregation regarding the needs of the members.*

**Question 2: Do we know how to disagree without being disagreeable in ways that destroy our relationships?**

- *Try not to be too sensitive to comments made by others.*
- *We certainly realize how important it is to respectfully disagree with different opinions. Hopefully we will strive to respect others and their differing opinions; however, some people are more sensitive than others and we need to try to be aware about the feelings of others at all times.*
- *This kind of thing always needs to be worked on.*
- *We believe that, as a congregation, we are able to disagree without causing hard feelings between members as a general rule. However, there are always people who would be exceptions to the rule.*
- *Most of us are lacking in polished personal skills, but this has a lot to do with personality, confidence and self-liking. Some of the careers of our church members have experienced have caused them to develop better personal skills than others or have taken classes to learn how to handle tricky situations. In a disagreement, both sides need to find a point of commonality rather than dwell on the points of separation. Take your pride out of the picture. Agree to disagree. You can always exit gracefully by saying something like "Well you may be right." Compromise is always a work in progress and is important.*
- *Some questions that arise are these: Are we too regulated? Are there too many unwritten rules? Are we fostering a closed environment? These things mentioned would create chances for disagreements to arise. As some may be uncomfortable with sharing ideas for fear of disagreement, being embarrassed or ridiculed, maybe we could offer a suggestion box.*
- *We had a disagreement on rather or not we can disagree without being disagreeable. It seems that sometimes members of the congregation can take things too personally or can make disagreements become personal attacks on others when there is a difference of opinion. This needs to be addressed as we have lost members because of this, but how?*

**Question 3: What can we do to foster a better sense of belonging to each other?**

- *We should reinstitute the Shepherding Program (or a similar visitation program). We need to have more contact with present members, those who have fallen away from the church and visitors.*
- *We feel that church participation is key in fostering a sense of belonging. Getting to know other members by participating in group activities like circles, fifth Sunday lunches and board game nights could help with this mission.*
- *We do as the scripture says – treat your neighbor as yourself.*
- *We could belong and understand each other better if communication was better. If we don't belong to music or youth or outreach, then we may not know what they're planning or in*

*what they are involved. We only know what we're doing. To get a sense of the rest of the congregation, maybe something about each group could be put in the newsletter.*

- *Put working as a team into practice. Smiling helps a lot – frowns or other facial expressions can dissuade people from approaching. Try to work on voice tone to make yourself sound as pleasant as possible. Ask people for help. Actively participate.*
- *Do more fun things together as a church. Try harder to separate the business aspect of church from worship. Encouraging more nationalities to worship here could help our congregation too. Get a fresh outlook on worship aspects like music.*
- *As far as belonging to each other, some said yes and some said no. Having generational family attendance at Bethany can foster a strong sense of belonging to individual members, but it can also make people who don't have these family connections feel like outsiders. Other ways people can feel connected is to attend some groups in the church like CMF/CWF, choir, bell choir and Sunday School. Attending some activities that are scheduled like camping trips, family game night and various other happenings could help too. Spending time together creates feelings of belonging. We speak and are friendly to visitors to help them have a sense of belonging, but is that enough? Do we try to find out how their experience was at the end of the service? Is there an emphasis on bringing those people back? Could we provide a mentorship program to help include new families?*
- *The minister should "smile" more.*

**Question 4: Do we have too much or not enough emphasis on ministering to people who are members of our congregation?**

- *We do not think it is possible to minister too much. Showing care and concern for others is always positive and welcome.*
- *No.*
- *We can never have too much emphasis on ministering to people. There are things groups do that the church as a whole is not involved in – CWF has a mission chairman that coordinates transportation, meals, caregiving, etc... to members. The church as a whole needs to be more involved with ministering, not just certain groups.*
- *We all agreed that we don't have too much. Elders and Deacons could do more to minister and not leave it all to the preacher. It shouldn't be a person's job to minister, but everyone's responsibility to be contacted and made to feel a part of the church family. The card ministry has been great. Name tags might be a positive thing – the children could make them for everyone.*
- *We could build a shower and possibly a small apartment near the church to offer to a family who may have an emergency to minister.*
- *A unanimous no.*
- *The minister should call before visiting members.*