

LEAD PASTOR

“Cross my heart, and hope to die.” Do you remember that phrase from when you were a kid? When I was growing up, this phrase could be added to a promise made, in order to “up the ante.” I don’t know about you, but it seems like I make far fewer promises as an adult than I did as a child. Perhaps this is because, as an adult, we understand the power that a promise has and the repercussions of not following through once a promise is made. When we make promises we tend to think carefully about if we really can and will follow through.

Some of you may remember that in the mid 1970’s the congregation created a written promise, known as a covenant, about how the church would strive to live in our life together and in our world. In an effort to keep this promise in the forefront of the church’s mind, it was read on communion Sundays for many years. Then, I am told, about ten to fifteen years ago when it ceased to be used, and existed as a document in the back of each hymnal.

Last year, when we finished affirming our guiding principles and creating new “Who we are” and “What we do” statements, I was asked to consider bringing out and taking a look at the covenant to determine if it would benefit our congregation at this time. I loved the idea. The very concept of a promise made by the community as to how we will live together and live out who we are and what we do, excited me! To me, it is a way to keep our vision for who God is calling us to be in front of us and be challenged to live into that identity.

So on April 22, during the Sunday school hour, we had an open gathering to discuss the affirmation or tweaking of the 1976 version of the church covenant which reads:

Having been led by the Spirit of God to place our trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we solemnly and joyfully covenant with God and with each other as a fellowship of faith.

Believing that God has revealed the truth of life in Christ, we will seek to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord through Bible reading, prayer, worship and obedience.

Believing that the local church serves the cause of Christ on Earth, we will give it our financial support and service with gratitude. Striving to live together in Christian love, we will pray for each other, share each other’s joys, and help one another in sickness and distress.

Believing that God has called us to witness to his saving power and love, we will try to bring our personal, family, and community relationships under the Lordship of Christ. We will also aid in proclaiming the gospel to the whole world and work for justice, freedom, dignity, and peace.

And now, our Father, we acknowledge our weaknesses and profess our need of you. We thank you for the contributions of others to our lives. Make us aware of the effects our lives have on others. Help us to be instruments of your peace. Fill us with joy in our faith and with hope for the coming of your kingdom. Amen.

The class offered many wonderful insights and determined to continue the discussion the next Sunday, April 29. The following week, the group discerned together that perhaps it would be best if the congregation went through a period of regularly reading the covenant together again in order to determine as a larger body if the words still felt as though they accurately described the life that we desire to live together. We agreed that we would again read the covenant on communion Sundays for the remainder of 2018 and then discuss the covenant again in January 2019.

I hope that every person will be able to read and consider the covenant in light of the work that we have done together over the last few years on the guiding principles, "Who we are" and "What we do" statements. I pray that we will be given wisdom as to if this promise (covenant) to one another is something that we want to use in order to keep our eyes focused on our life together. This covenant has such beautiful potential to be a tool which we use to enhance our life together and to be the church that God is calling us to be.

~Rev. Lara Freeburg