

Susan Gascho-Cooke
January 18, 2015
Romans 8:38-39

So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the Day of Judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.

So, I realized as I was writing my sermon this weekend, that I had a question about CMCL's history, and it was too late to ask around for the answer, So, I'm going to ask you all!

Is anyone here this morning who was here at CMCL's founding? My question is: How did CMCL get its name? Was there a short list that folks voted on? Between Orange St Mennonite, Community Mennonite, and One More Mennonite Church of Lancaster?

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What amazes me is that in my almost five years here, It never before struck me to wonder about the name!

I will often ask people I know the story behind their name –or parents the story behind choosing their child's name, or anyone the story behind their pet's names.

Names are awesome. I was never even someone who was sure she'd have kids, but I always enjoyed thinking about what I'd name them!

Part of my lack of wonderment, I think, is how over-exposed the word community is – And therefore, how little attention is paid to it

“Community” is such a non-controversial value Mennonites sometimes think they invented the idea,

Of the three definitions I came across of “community,” The first is definitely the most familiar: “a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common” on a day like re-covenanting Sunday, we think about what characteristics we hold “in common”; our 12 scriptures discernment process was also about-identifying scriptures we value “in common” our core values, we have “in common,” as are such traits as being creative, inquiring, inclusive,

One of the blessings or curses of being a Mennonite church in this county is that there are so many, that folks can kind of “shop” for the one whose values they most closely share and whose members they most closely resemble.

There is a blessing in this – if church is a time to caucus with those most like one’s self, and sometimes it is; but there is a danger, too – in creating an environment when is almost never in the presence of folks who might question one’s most comfortable notions.

We are blessed to have much diversity here at CMCL, at least as it relates to church and religious background. Though some of us did grow up Mennonite, many of us had no previous ties to the Mennonite church.

So, we share values from Anabaptism –such as community, peace, action over doctrine, voluntary (non-coerced) faith. But we also have in common a shared passion that faith can be **professed**, that love can be **expressed**, in almost any way and that anyone is welcome.

One of the definitions of “community” that struck me has very fitting for *us* at *this* community, is: “a place considered together with its inhabitants”.

CMCLers’ fierce determination to protect the environment, Seeing the truth that we are deeply connected to the earth, especially the bit we get to hang out on here in South-central PA We recognize how inextricably linked our thriving and our fates are with the health of this land This growing awareness of being “in community” here Being embodied ourselves, and grounded in earth, Keeps us in touch with more than just those who Think or believe or look like us, But beckons us to the streets with those marching For the last definition of community talks of the *Feeling of fellowship, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests and goals.*

This may be the hard one, but one with built-in advice for achieving it. There are plenty of times when true community, doesn’t *feel* nearly as fellowshipy as we’d like, but I also think that in the times it does not, the way back toward it is in **sharing with one another** not just having them in common, but **sharing them** I think sometimes we can forget that even the things we agree on can be enriched by sharing with one another about them.

The lost art of testimony ... for edifying one another is often the difference between simply being in community and being able to *feel* the connection.

Finally, though, there’s a fourth kind of community that’s not in the dictionary, and that is the Beloved Community that Martin Luther King, Jr. so eloquently described In so many of his sermons and speeches.

A community in which all members were equal, all children could hope, without delusion, that their dreams might become reality, if they but worked hard; where people whom society deemed irreconcilably different from each other, would hold hands.

I've spoken about community; let's look at beloved – I think of the phrase we tell our kids, and one another here:

You are Known and Loved By God,

And think the radical bit might well be the “known” part; that we can feel loved, while being known, means we can't use the excuse of feeling like an undeserving fraud. We are loved, even as we are known.

Today's passage from I John, is well-loved by quite a handful Of CMCLers

For it's affirmation of the kind of Love God is – God is the kind of love that “casts out fear, “The inevitable fears we all carry –fear of loss of control, fear of loss of connection, fear of failure, and for many in this world, fear for life and limb.

As this Love is perfected in us, it does not make us *right* or *perfect* or *sufficient* it makes us BOLD – how fabulous is that?

As one CMCLer pointed out, this passage is like a guide to the proper sighting of God at work – if fear is at work, it's not God. If folks are not loving their neighbors and enemies that's not God at work.

Some criticize Martin Luther King, Jr. for having been too soft; for spreading a dream that people could hold on to without making the necessary changes.

I think we have done that to his legacy –In the way the media has portrayed him. If you read the actual texts of his speeches, though, there is great challenge.

I'd like to read to you a letter than came out yesterday from the African American Presidents and Deans of theological schools in the US and Canada. It's a call to Beloved Community NOW, showing ways we can work together in this important moment.

An Open Letter to Presidents and Deans of Theological Schools in the United States,

At its annual meeting at Shaw University Divinity School in Raleigh, NC, African American Presidents and Deans of theological schools in the United States issued a call for action in light of the current state of social justice in the United States of America.

One of our leaders, a founding member of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), noted that the socio-economic and political realities that led to the establishment of SNCC at Shaw University 54 years ago are actually eclipsed by the realities of this day... Discrimination thrives, with no intent or program for relief. As was true in the 1960's it is time for citizens of good conscience to once again rise up and rally to the cry for freedom and justice for all.

From a manger in Bethlehem, a Bantustan in Soweto, a bus in Montgomery, a freedom Summer in Mississippi, a bridge in Selma, a street in Ferguson, a doorway and shots fired in Detroit, a Moral Monday in Raleigh, an assault in an elevator in Atlantic City, an

office building in Colorado Springs, a market in Paris, a wall in Palestine, a pilgrimage to the shrine of Rincon and a restoration of ties between Cuba and the United States on December 17th, the kidnapping and assault of young school-aged girls and the reported killing of 2000 women, children and men in Nigeria, a new generation of dream defenders, a transgender teen's suicide note, to our abuse of the environment - God sends a sign - a Kairos moment. The racial climate in the United States, and the respect for our common humanity everywhere, is clearly in decline.

How can Americans acquiesce, remain silent, passive and neutral as African-American men and women are slain in the streets of Ferguson, Staten Island, Cleveland and beyond? How can people of conscience be still when African-Americans quake with fear to walk without harm in their own cities and towns? How can we remain docile when leaders of our nation, especially the United States Congress abdicate their civic and moral responsibility to set a tone of civility and humanity?

How can we abide a justice system, which is neither blind nor equitable? How can we suffer a justice system that victimizes African Americans and Latinos by jailing them disproportionately?

How can we sit idly by while our children are slaughtered in the streets without provocation?

How can we as United States citizens claim that we are "created equal" and that we are committed to "freedom and justice for all" while injustice is rampant in the land?

How can we continue with business as usual in the midst of so many egregious injustices?

We believe that citizens of good conscience must arise and call our nation to assess and address the rising tide of injustice throughout our legal and criminal justice systems. There must be restraint to those who shoot, kill, and maim innocent young men and women in the streets of our nation. And so . . .

We call on all freedom loving Americans to reaffirm a commitment to "the beloved community," where the freedom and rights of all are respected and protected...

We call on our churches and every house of faith to challenge their members and communities to live out an inclusive commitment to love God, self, the neighbor-enemy, and creation across any and all boundaries that would dehumanize, alienate, and separate.

We call on all Americans of good conscience who gather across the country to speak out for liberty and justice for all... always. As our modern day prophet, Martin Luther King, Jr. noted, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Arise from the embers of silence and speak up and speak out as the prophet of old, "let justice run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24). We encourage you to endorse this statement by responding in your own particular context to

our theological call to action with curricular programs, public forums, teach-ins, calls to your congressional leaders, writing op-ed pieces, and more.

We recognize this Kairos moment and stand in solidarity for "liberty and justice for all."

Yours in the struggle, African American Presidents and Deans in Theological Education

So, as a church who has chosen the name, "community"; whose mantra is about being "beloved": You are known and loved by God--the kind of love that is not inspired by fear, but rather the kind that inspires boldness, and indiscriminate love--is this not an apt challenge for us, in this painful, ripe moment, on the anniversary of the death of MLK, who cried out for the compassion and companionship of white people of faith?

Can we hear this call to be co-builders of the Beloved Community in our generation??

I invite you to consider answering this call, to throw your/our lot in with our brothers and sisters of color, just as we throw our lot in w/ one another here yet again today