

State of the Unity

Ephesians 4:1-6

January 31, 2010

This past Wednesday our President gave a state of the union message to our nation. He outlined his assessment of where we have been as a nation and how we are doing. In essence, he was casting vision for the future. This morning I give you our State of the Unity. Where are we at as a church? I will give it in light of our mission and core values, and in the context of Paul's description of how we should be walking in Eph. 4:1-6.

I. The **Proposition**: When we are walking as God intended, how does the church behave?

- “Entreat/Implore (NASB) Urge (NIV) *Beseech*”: *parakaleō*: “I beg of you, please.”
- “*Walk*”: *peripateō* “to walk about,” thus, “to conduct one’s self, to order one’s behavior.”
- “*Worthy*”: *axios* “to balance the scales or equal out. Our doctrine is to be balanced by the way we live our lives.

A. The **character** of a unified church (v. 1-3)

What do we want to be known for? How would we describe our fellowship? Unity is maintained by purposeful actions of Christ-like living.

¹Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, ³being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

1. **Humility**: *James 4:6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." Cf. Mt. 5:3*
 - Def.: Knowing our place in God’s plan, resulting in a proper evaluation of who we really are.

“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.” Rom. 12:3

- “Humility is that grace that, when you think you have it... you have lost it.”
 - Do you think you are always right? Have you become more teachable this past year?
2. **Gentleness**: (Meekness) **Matt. 5:5** “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.
- Def.: Power under control. It is not weakness. In the Greek it was used for a soothing medicine, a colt that had been broken, and a soft wind. In each case there is power, but that power is under control.
 - How do you treat those people that demonstrate less spiritual maturity? Would your behavior be considered Christ-like?
3. **Patience**: *I Thes. 5:14* “*be patient with everyone.*”
- Literally means “long-tempered,” (long suffering) the ability to endure discomfort without fighting back.
 - A man who was at a supermarket and the baby with him in his shopping cart was screaming. A woman nearby noticed that all the time the baby was screaming the man kept calmly saying: “Keep calm, Albert. Keep calm, Albert.” Finally, in admiration for the man’s patience with the screaming child, the woman walked up to the man and said: “Sir, I must commend you for your patience with baby Albert.” The man corrected her, “Miss, actually I’m Albert.”
 - Do you think you are patient? Ask your wife or kids what they would say!
 - Illustration: You jerk...
4. **Forbearing love**: I Peter. 4:8; Col. 3:14
- It starts in our own families

- Sometimes we find it hard to get along with each other. A little boy was sitting on the front steps looking very upset when his father came home. His father asked him what was wrong, and the boy said, “Well, just between us, Dad, I’m having trouble getting along with that wife of yours.”
- I heard another story about a little girl who was being forced to eat alone at a small table in the kitchen as part of her discipline for disobedience. As the rest of the family sat at the other table trying to ignore the young girl, they heard her pray, “I thank You, Lord, for preparing a table for me in the presence of my enemies.”
- Do you have anyone that you have trouble getting along with? Who must you put up with in our church? **Will the Bride of Christ get to heaven with a fat lip?**
- Someone asked Ghandi, the spiritual leader of India, “What is the greatest hindrance to Christianity in India?” He replied, “Christians.”

5. **Diligence**:

- Being eager to maintain, or guard. A present participle indicating that work is constant! **Neighborhood watch! Don’t just put up the sign.**
- Why? There is an intentional effort to preserve the unity of the Body. We work at preserving unity not creating it. **Unity doesn’t mean uniformity. Unanimity doesn’t mean unilateral conformity.**
- To dwell above with saints in love, Aye, that will be glory! To dwell below with saints I know, now that’s a different story!
- How? In the bond of peace

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful (Col. 3:15)

God’s wisdom is “first pure, then peaceable” (James 3:17).

B. The **consequence** of a unified church (v. 4-6)

⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

1. The result is that there is “**oneness**”: *Body, spirit, Lord, faith, baptism, and God!* Purity of doctrine of itself does not produce spiritual unity, for there are churches that are sound in faith, but unsound when it comes to love. This is why Paul joins the two: “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15). Wiersbe
2. Examples of disunity in the church:
 - Someone not getting their way. The “Lord’s Prayer” opens with “Our Father”—not “My Father.”
 - Elders not united in vision and direction
 - You disagree with the emphasis
 - A faction growing because of a divisive person
3. John 17 and unity: God prioritizes it! Jesus prays for it! Believers participate in it!
4. There is **hope** in our calling. We are encouraged to stay the course. Our future hope is secure and we can focus on *finishing the task not fighting about the past!*
5. There is **sovereignty**: God reigns supreme! When we get along, God is glorified! Notice He is... *Over all, through all, and in all!* What doesn’t that cover?

II. The **Progress**: 2009 in review... Where have we been?

As we look over the past year, we have had a wild ride at Moorpark EV Free Church. It has been a year of ups and downs, but in the end God has remained faithful to us. Let’s take a little stroll down memory lane and look at what God has done. **Show Slide show.**

A. **KidVenture**: After a year of being the interim director, Cheryl Erwin was appointed by the elders to oversee our children’s

ministry on a permanent basis. She now has 16 volunteers (plus those of you who volunteer in the nursery on a quarterly basis) on 3 teams that rotate. A highlight this year was their participation in our Christmas program.

- B. **Focus Groups, part 2:** 5 great nights and over 42 people evaluated their own personal spiritual disciplines. We addressed issues and once again “heard” what was on your hearts.
- C. **Men’s Fraternity:** 9 men finished year 1 and presented their manhood plans. 15 men are currently attending year 2. 16 men went on our first-ever men’s retreat at Forest Home.
- D. **Leadership Development Group:** We are now 18 months into the intentional discipleship of 8 men (including our 3 elders). Last year we read and discussed “*Courageous Leadership*” by Bill Hybels and now we are studying the Life of Christ. Our Live 2:6 (Based on I John 2:6) group meets one Sunday night a month.
- E. **Women’s Ministry:** Our women’s ministry under Lynn Adele Voorman and her team continues to grow. They have 2 weekly Bible studies, 19 women at retreat last spring, and 60 at the Mother/Daughter Tea and launched monthly breakfasts this fall. **See pix Board**
- F. **New Growth:** After a difficult summer with several families leaving the church, we have rebounded this winter with enthusiasm. 7 people got baptized in 2009 and we had 3 people become members. Our attendance for 2009 averaged almost 80 people per Sunday and we had the best year of giving ever, with over \$267,000 given. Our single largest offering ever was on Dec. 27, 2009. We also took in over \$5000 in special offerings this past year.
- G. **Vision Night:** Our 2nd annual Vision Night was held at Viva la Pasta. We were reminded again of all that God had done, reaffirmed our elders, and were challenged by the inspiring words of Steve Larson.

- H. **Life Groups:** This past year our small group ministry flourished. We now have 4 life groups with over 40 adults involved. Our 5th life group is our **A.L.I.V.E.** student ministry gathering which meets weekly with about 7-10 students. The spring found the peak of 805 (College Ministry) with over 20 students participating each week.
- I. Our **Community Impact** team was busy all year. Highlights include our first-ever Serve Day in June where over 55 of our people participated, our booth at Moorpark Country Days, and our Thanksgiving food drive and our adopt-a-family outreach at Christmas
- J. **Christmas Eve Service:** We hosted our 2nd annual Christmas Eve service at the Moorpark Country Club. We took a step up faith and did another direct mail piece to all of Moorpark... over 11,000 homes! There was 1 first time decision and 3 new families have started attending as a result.
- K. **Preaching:** In January: *What Would Jesus Think?* In February we did our first-ever *Month of the Family*. We then spent the rest of the spring and summer studying *Contagious Joy... A Study of Philippians*. In the fall we looked at the *Basics... Why Our Church Exists and Questions for God*. 16 people signed up to read through the Bible in a year. I plan on going to Israel in April to further my study of the life and ministry of Christ.

III. 2010 Initiatives... Where are we headed? Our theme this year is “**The Journey...Walk as Jesus Walked.**” It comes from I John 2:6. We want to be committed Christ-followers in every aspect of our lives.

A. Our **Vision:** Our mission is clear... “*We want to become a community of authentic Christ-followers by knowing Him and making Him known!*”

1. **Intentional Investment:** We want to invest intentionally in the lives of others, give a verbal witness of Jesus Christ, and then let God do His work in them. We would like to

grow spiritually and numerically this next year. I am asking everyone to identify 3 people they are praying for to come to Christ this next year.

2. Global Ministries

- **Mexico Missions Trip:** We will do our first all-church missions trip this summer under the capable leadership of David Olson and his team.
 - **Church Planting:** We continue to support our church plant (Anthem Church) and will complete our 2-year commitment to them by next summer. They are averaging about 200 people.
 - **4th Missionary:** We hope to add a 4th missionary to our support by next fall. We now tithe 10% of our budget to Global Ministries outside of our own church.
3. **Sacrificial Giving:** We more than weathered the financial storm last year. Thanks to those who gave sacrificially this past year. We want to continue to save for a future building and be good stewards of our finances. **Look at finance charts.**
 4. **Pastoral Staff:** I believe we need to add a part-time staff person as an associate pastor this next year. We may need to start with a pastoral intern and work our way towards that. My desire is that we launch a summer intern program as well.
 5. **Fervent Prayer:** We continue to pray every Sunday morning at 9 am for our church, our community, and for our country. My dream is that we would have every member attend at least once a month. We will gather on **Feb. 21st for our 2nd Annual Moorpark Prayer gathering.** We are expecting over 500 people to attend and I am praying that we are 10% of that number.
 6. **Increased Service:** My prayer is that no regular member or attendee will be on the ministry sidelines. There are currently needs in KidVenture, A.L.I.V.E., music, set-up,

secretarial and administration. Is it unrealistic that 90% of our people are serving somewhere regularly?

7. **Two Services:** Our hope is to go to 2 services once we start to average more than 140 people a week. We would need double in attendance to accomplish that goal. Next up: a building of our own!
8. **Partnership Membership vs. Consumer Membership:** This isn't Costco. We don't ask, "What's in it for me?" We are more like partners in a business... the King's business! If we are partners, we **all** carry the burden for the success of the ministry! We aren't customers or consumers! Each year, I would like you to renew your pledge to be "*all in*". If you haven't joined the church, why not? Quit dating us and let's get married!

B. Our **Values**

1. We cover 1 value a week. They are printed on the website. They describe our DNA... it is who we are!
2. Are you merely compliant or do you embrace them? Are you living them? **Handout**

C. Our **Volition:** The choice is yours! Are you all in?

Sneak Peek: Next week we will celebrate Pro-Life Sunday. Read Psalm 147:3, Mark 1:40-42, and John 5:1-9. How does God heal people today? Pray for me as I go to speak to several hundred college students at Crown College in MN, and train about 100 youth workers next week.