

To all the Saints at First United:

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:2-6)

I opened with St. Paul’s greeting from his letter to the church at Philippi because it is fitting for the saints of FULC. We are called to share the Gospel in this crazy world that seems to be upside down most of the time. The chaos that surrounds us today makes our proclamation ever more important.

A couple of months ago, I stated in my sermon that I believed that it is time we make public what we believe here at FULC. That is, we are inclusive and want to make it clear to those to whom we are speaking: the LGBTQIA+ community. I continue to think it is time because of something that happened two weeks ago after worship.

We had a young man worship with us that Sunday who had never been to FULC before. He is looking for a safe place to worship because he is gay. As he was leaving, I struck up a conversation with him and he asked if we were welcoming of the gay community. I assured him that we are and that he is always welcome.

After that conversation I realized that nothing we publicly say makes it clear he is welcome. Our website has a link to our values, which says we value inclusion and diversity. We say that all are welcome here at FULC, and while that may be clear to us that the LGBTQIA+ community is welcome, it isn’t clear to them.

We need to be clear and obvious to the LGBTQIA+ community that they are welcome. One of our young folks suggested to me that a small rainbow flag (4"x6") in the corner of one of our doors would be sufficient to let them know. We would also need to add a similar small token on the first page of our website. This is literally a small thing that will make a very big difference.

If we are going to be effective in our proclamation that God loves all people regardless, then we need to be clear to this segment of the population who have been abused by the church for so long. One of the young man’s comments to me was that he has been to so many churches where it was made clear to him that he is a problem. He heard judgment being preached against him which made him feel unsafe and most assuredly unwanted. I assured him that he would never hear such a thing from us.

I write all of this because I felt such compassion and sadness for the young man. I have no doubt Jesus felt the same way that morning. So, what shall we do?

May God continue to bless you and I pray that you have a Happy Thanksgiving.

Shalom

