



Sharing the Good News!

Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

The Truth

by Alan C. Miller, Conference Minister

An elderly woman from a United Church of Christ congregation in Vermont was attending a meeting that was contentious. After listening to everyone else spout off, she finally spoke. She said: “Tell me the truth. When you reach my stage of life, you don’t want to spend time on anything but the truth!”

“The Truth.” I cannot even begin to count the number of meetings I have been at over the past 31 years in which various individuals claimed to have “the truth.” In almost every situation the meeting was called in response to some controversy; and usually it was the people who were yelling the loudest who were sure that their viewpoint was “the truth.”

The Bible gives us a number of insights about truth. Jesus said: “I am the way and the truth and the life.” (John 14:6a) Later the Apostle Paul encouraged us “to speak the truth in love.” (Ephesians 4:15) What are we to make of these insights?

I am sure that many of you have seen the black and white poster that to some looks like a picture of a vase. To others, the same poster looks like the profiles of two women looking at each other. Then there are those who can see both the vase and the profiles of the women looking at each other. How is it that humans can look at the same item, event, or occurrence and come away with different interpretations of what they have seen? And if this is what we do, then what does this say about “the truth?”

The older I get the more convinced I become that there is only one truth – God. And if we understand that God came to walk among us in the person of the Christ, then perhaps to know the truth has less to do with knowing and more to do with being. To know the truth is to live life and treat others the way Christ did. Jesus was real with people; he was in the moment with whoever he was with. He did not judge them nor condemn them; rather he reached out in understanding and love. And he reached out most to those whom society had decided were not worth loving.

Perhaps then when Paul encourages us “to speak the truth in love,” he is encouraging us to be real with each other. To be honest with each other about our opinions, our thoughts, and our feelings; and to do it in the spirit “of love,” to share our opinions, thoughts, and feelings in a way in which we take responsibility for them and do not harm the integrity of the other.

With this understanding of “the truth,” you can begin to see how much of our conversation is cluttered with arrogance, gossip, condemnation, and criticism – no wonder that elderly woman has no time for anything but the truth. At her age she is looking for honest and meaningful conversation and relationships; she has no time for those who hide behind masks and pretense. She sounds like my kind of person --- real!

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