

1 Corinthians 1:10

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you,

but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

The Christian Church was quite united before the Great Schism of 1054, which led to the break in communion between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Problems, false teachings, false teachers, had been dealt with and the Church was monolithic in its structure.

Until Luther that is. For centuries, the ones in charge made up the rules of how the Church would operate and it generally helped those who were in power at the time, usually at the expense of the ordinary people.

Ecclesiastes 1:9

What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.

The Protestant Reformation shattered the monolith and ushered in new math for the church- **We actually multiply by division!**

Off of the 3 main branches of Christianity there are hundreds of denominations.

What would the apostle Paul think?

He wrote to the church at Corinth: **“We are not amused!”**

What I mean is that each one of you says,

“I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.”

Is Christ divided?

Let's see; that's 4! Imagine what he would say in light of the 100s that exist today.

He goes on to remind them...

1 Corinthians 1:18

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Be in agreement!

Be united in the same mind and the same purpose!

1 Timothy 2:3–5

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,

who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

For there is one God,

and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

But how?

How do we work to achieve unity within the Christian Church?

Well, I'm sure you have a pretty good idea of the approach that many people want to take, an approach that is not new at all.

It's commonly known as **gospel reductionism**.

And the approach is simply to agree that God loves you and nothing else matters.

Of course, even this is seen as divisive by some because it excludes those who don't believe in God, or that God cares at all, much less loves people who are just accidents of the cosmos.

But Paul knew this.

1 Corinthians 1:18

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

The cross of Jesus is a scandal. It is foolishness to those who don't believe.

Since we are made in the image of God, we have the ability to reject the God who created us and wants all of us to be saved. Which explains why only approximately 1/3 of the world's population is Christian.

What we're considering today is how to unite that 1/3 so that we agree with one another.

So, I'm recommending what I'll call **Potluck Healing!**

POTLUCK

COVERED-DISH SUPPER

CARRY-IN

BUFFET

TUREEN DINNER

BASKET DINNER

CASSEROLE DINNER

SMORGASBORD

All of these are faith-based meals. You have faith that you won't end up with all salads or desserts. In fact, some take the faith out of the meal and specify contributions to the meal based on the alphabet.

You end up with a better balance that way but miss out on the thrill. Where else can you possibly have no vegetables and 3 desserts for dinner?

But when you advertise a church meal you better be careful to proofread. For example...

Announcement for a National **PRAYER & FASTING** conference:

"The cost for attending the Fasting and Prayer conference **includes meals.**"

The church will host an evening of fine dining, superb entertainment and gracious **hostility.**

Ushers will **eat** latecomers.

Potluck supper: prayer and **medication** to follow.

Nowhere is diversity more celebrated than at a potluck dinner. If you sat down and thought about it, you could come up with 100s of dishes you've sampled at such an event.

Some of us are conservative and take only dishes we recognize and know that we'll like; old favorites.

Others will do the opposite and look for some unknown dish they have never tried before.

Often the word will circulate about something that is a big hit.

Did you try that chocolate, peanut butter Bundt cake with icing?

No matter what approach we take, the opportunity is right there in front of us to eat and be satisfied.

We don't talk about whether it was cooked with gas on the stove or in an instant pot.

We don't discuss the merits of white rice against brown rice.

We don't criticize people because they ate the noodle dish instead of the ham and beans.

People choose what they want. They eat. Maybe they like it or don't like it.

Everyone makes their choices, eats and are satisfied.

Or, they're too picky and go home hungry.

What does any of this have to do with unity in the church you might ask?

Potluck Healing!

1st – We all agree that we must eat to live!

It is not a matter of take it or leave it – without food you cannot live.

John 6:35

Jesus said to them,

“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Any unity within the Christian Church must begin with Jesus, the Bread of Life.

John concluded his Gospel with this...

John 20:30–31

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Peter tells us...

2 Peter 1:19

And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed,

to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place,

until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,

Jesus said...

John 5:46–47

For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.

But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?

Any unity within the Church of Jesus Christ must come from the Word of God.

It begins with Genesis which is God's eyewitness account of how everything came into existence.

It continues throughout history as God's plan of redemption unfolds through Noah and Babel and Abraham and the Exodus and the promised land and in the fullness of time, God's final word – Jesus!

Any unity within the Church must be a result of the work of the Holy Spirit!

1 Corinthians 12:3

Therefore, I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!"

and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

After Jesus called himself the bread of life...

John 6:66–69

many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve,

"Do you want to go away as well?"

Simon Peter answered him,

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.

The 1st step in potluck healing is

– Agree that we must eat to live

and our food is Jesus the Bread of life, the Word of God!!

Potluck Healing!

2nd – We agree that for some people certain foods must be avoided!

Some people have allergies that are dangerous if not deadly: nuts, shellfish, gluten.

They must use discernment when stepping up to the potluck lest they do serious harm to themselves.

And so, within Christendom there may be things that some people must avoid for their own spiritual health.

- Some believe that consumption of any alcoholic beverage is a sin.
- Some believe that caffeine is a sin.
- Some believe that fantasy fiction is dangerous and must be avoided at all costs,

Back in Paul's day, there were many who believed eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols and then offered for sale in the marketplace was idolatry. Paul addressed this in

Romans 14:3–8

Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats,

for God has welcomed him...

5 One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike.

Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord.

The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God,

while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.

For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord.

So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

For some people these things are like food allergies. According to their conscience, they must be avoided.

But none of these things should hinder our unity if we follow Paul's advice...

Romans 14:3–4

Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another?

It is before his own master that he stands or falls.

And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Potluck Healing!

3rd – We agree that people are free to make different dietary choices!

Last Fall I had to have a medical exam that requires extensive preparation and is very unpleasant. Anyone who is 50 or older knows of what I speak.

Well, the results from that test made me decide to eliminate corn from my diet.

This wasn't required, it was a choice. I felt, based on what I had read, that making this change would improve my health.

Well, it did and I've stuck with it and if people ask me I'll tell them.

But, it doesn't make me better than anyone else.

It isn't the only way to eat!

Anyone else can eat corn to their heart's content and it has no effect on me.

Some people choose to be vegetarian or vegan or Pescetarian (that's basically a vegetarian who is allowed to eat fish).

They are free to eat that way. It doesn't make them better than anyone else and it should not cause them to judge anyone else (although we know it doesn't always turn out that way).

And so, within the church we make choices. We express our faith in different ways. Some traditions are important to us and not so important to others.

These choices should not disrupt our unity!

Here we must be careful to point out that we are not free to pick and choose which truths of God revealed in His word we will accept.

John 8:31–32

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him,

“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

➤ God and Creation,

- Man and Woman created in the image of God,
- Marriage,
- God's Law given to show our need for a Savior,
- Salvation by Grace through faith in the life death, resurrection and person Jesus Christ,
- God's grace offered in the Sacraments of Baptism and Communion,
- God's law to show us how to live as faithful disciples of Jesus.

Not tradition, not open to choice but God's truths accepted by faith.

But, if you want to adopt certain spiritual disciplines or traditions, go right ahead, but don't let them get in the way of unity!

And finally, **Potluck Healing! 4th – People have different tastes!**

Nowhere is this more evident than in worship styles.

I've been accused by some of my brother pastors of not being Lutheran because I use a guitar in worship.

Some people prefer liturgy while others think like Garrison Kiellor who said,

You know you're Lutheran... oh, wrong quote.

Lutherans follow the traditional liturgy. It's their way of paying for their sins!

There are many different ways to worship. If we focus on Jesus and God's Word,

- If we offer the comfort and encouragement of the Gospel,
- If we clearly distinguish between Law and Gospel so that people know they're forgiven by grace through faith and then can live to the glory of God,

Then it doesn't matter if we use guitars or organ, brass, woodwinds and strings or just voices. It's like a potluck! Look at the variety of flavors and textures available for us to enjoy as we receive the nourishment we need to live.

Our particular tastes within the life and ministry of the church should not divide us!

Perhaps the best example of this is the music ministry of the Gettys. They bridge the gap between hymns and contemporary Christian music in such a way that the word of God is proclaimed in a beautiful way that is appealing to everyone!

So, **Potluck Healing!**

Agree that we must eat to live.

Agree that for some people certain foods must be avoided!

Agree that people are free to make different dietary choices!

Agree that people have different tastes!

that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.