

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
REV. JOHN BURTON
OCTOBER 16, 2011

SERMON: WE ARE PISTACHIO???

TEXT: EPHESIANS 4: 8, 11-16

**“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives and he gave gifts to men.”
And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists,
some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the
building up the Body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the
knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of
the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and
carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness
in deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every
way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and
knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working
properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.**

Does anyone here love ice cream? I'm not asking if it is on your diet. And I'm not asking if your doctor has said you can't have any. I just want to know if you love ice cream?

OK, I want to do a little experiment. When I took chemistry most of my experiments ended with an explosion. That's why I liked chemistry. No explosions today!

Everyone who likes ice cream hold up one hand. Put your hand down when I call out your favorite flavor.

Vanilla. Chocolate. Peach. Strawberry. Cherry. Rocky Road. Mocha. Cookie Dough. Raspberry. Neapolitan. Coconut. Fudge Ripple. Peanut butter.

There's still a few of you left. What are your favorite flavors?

Well, we don't all agree on what is the best flavor. In fact, we are a pretty diverse group. Actually, that isn't surprising is it? People are unique and have unique tastes.

When it comes to people who are looking for a church home – people are equally unique in their tastes and for what they are looking for a church.

Activities, theology, worship service style, service times, age of members, social characteristics of members, music, politics (yes/no, left/right), friendliness, etc...each church has its own favor – so does each denomination: Baptist (lots of varieties), Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Independents, and on and on and on.

The Apostle Paul, who never had a bowl of ice cream and never knew what he was missing, used a different vocabulary to talk about our differences. He talked about body parts that have different functions but all are part of the same body. He also talked about spiritual gifts. His passage from Ephesians was directly directed toward individual members but his message is just as true when directed at denominations.

We, too, are reaching to build up the Body of Christ until we attain the unity of faith through the knowledge of the Son of God so that we are no longer tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine stirred up by divisive and deceitful leaders.

But as we struggle to reach that maturity and unity we recognize that like individuals our denominations are also unique – possessing different gifts, strengths, weaknesses, interests, and such.

You show up at a Baptist church you know there is a pretty good chance that you will encounter a literal interpretation of scripture. It's a part of their flavor and they don't apologize for it.

You show up at a Catholic Church you know there is a pretty good chance that you will hear references made about the Pope. It's a part of their flavor and they don't apologize for it.

You show up at a Methodist Church you know there is a pretty good chance of running into a female clergy person. It's a part of their flavor and they don't apologize for it.

But I'm not really interested in defining what makes others sweet, healthy, and unique. I want you to consider what it is that makes US so.

There are two categories that I would like you to think about.

First, the flavoring that comes with being a Disciple of Christ, that is by being a part of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) things that are a part of our D.N.A.

1. Unity is our Polar Star

Our goal is to reunite the Body of Christ and heal the wounds that have come/are coming from sectarian divisions.

2. Open Membership

This is not a club for people “like us” – anyone can join! All believers are welcome!

3. Open Communion every Sunday

There is no test to determine your worthiness to partake of the most precious part of our church – communion. Anyone who believes is welcome to join us in proclaiming Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

4. Baptism of believers...by immersion

We don't baptize babies and children – we don't think that it is necessary because we believe that children or babies who die go straight to heaven. We only baptize persons who are old enough to make a choice. And we only baptize by immersion.

5. Christians only but not the only Christians

We respect other Christians of different denominations and are delighted to be “hitched up with them” to pull the Lord's wagon together – since we are all going to the same place.

6. Priesthood of all believers

“Holy rites” such as communion are not restricted to just members of the clergy. Laity can preach, presided at the Table, accept people into membership, and even perform baptisms – all responsibilities normally assigned to clergy but not excluded from lay members.

7. No creed but Christ

Our church does not have a creed – a statement of what all members must believe to be a member in good standing. Our creed is: Christ. Accept Christ as your Lord and Savior and that's enough for us. The rest is open to study and discussion among brothers and sisters in faith.

Second, what comes from this unique congregation:

1. Building

O'Neil Ford's modernistic building with its great use of windows and unique roof not only identifies us but contributes to the character of our worship service.

2. Eclectic music

Our music greatly defines who we are. Our style, "eclectic excellence" is unlike anything you might find anywhere else!

3. The Church that eats together

Our love of food and fellowship, revealed in WNL dinners, Tablehoppers, Supper Clubs, and potluck dinners does more than expand our waistlines it defines who we are.

4. Welcoming

No one comes to FCC Denton who is not welcomed and embraced. That is part of our character.

5. Historic relationship with Denton Community

FCC has a long standing role in the Denton Community, actively participating and leading in ways to make Denton a better place to live.

6. Leader in Ecumenical and Interfaith affairs in Denton

FCC has always been a leader in Ecumenical and Interfaith relationships. We are willing to talk and work with anyone.

7. Locally "owned" "affiliate" not franchise

(no one to say that we couldn't serve white grape juice for communion if we wanted to. No one from Indianapolis would call me saying, "Pastor Bruton, we understand that you have fallen into the heresy of white grape juice. We call on you to repent of your sin and to lead your congregation back to the glories of true religion. Run, we say run down to the store and buy you some purple grape juice - Welches!!")

I hope that you are sitting there saying...."wait, wait, wait you forgot to talk about..." Truly there are more ingredients that combine to make up our flavor than I can name.

First Christian Church will probably never be as popular as vanilla or chocolate but we are sweet and good and good for you! There's no need to try and change our flavor. There are people out there looking for a church just our flavor! We just need to tell people that we exist - not everyone knows!

We can do that with advertizing, and we will, and via our web site, and we will, but most of the people who are looking for a church just our flavor will find us by YOUR telling them about us – about our flavor. So I hope that this helps you have the list of ingredients for our unique flavor to share with people.

Lastly, about that title: We are “Pistachio.” It came to me a long time ago and when I wrote the sermon, well, I’m not sure that it fits. Therefore, I want your help. I want you to write me, email me, telephone me, or contact the church office and tell me “What flavor of ice cream would you associate with First Christian Church of Denton and why?”

Remember – vote for your flavor!