

## **Making Choices (Criteria for Decision-making)**

If you could make changes at Unity Presbyterian Church, what would those changes be? And if you could preserve aspects of UPC, what would you preserve?

Your ideas are likely to be different than your neighbor's ideas. So, how does the community decide? Should church members' preferences and likes predominate in determining the direction of the congregation? Should choices be based on what might attract more people or draw a younger crowd? Should increasing our knowledge of Scripture be our focus or reaching out to more people in service and mission? These are tough questions with no clear-cut answers. One thing is certain: honest and sensitive and respectful dialog will be necessary as we make our way.

**More important than the actual decisions that will be made for the future of Unity are the process and guiding principles on which those decisions are based.** As a congregation it is imperative that our process be characterized by openness, transparency and respect, and that all voices be included and valued.

The following questions provide one basis for evaluating our choices and making decisions:

- Is it consistent with our identity and our past?
- Is it congruent with the goals we seek to reach and who we want to become?
- Is it faithful to the Christian understanding of God's kingdom/realm and our call to discipleship?
- Does it promote reconciliation and wholeness and healing among the human family?
- Does it make us more authentic and real and responsible?
- Does it address, in this moment of time, the needs of people or a community or the world?
- Is human potential and dignity promoted, with the goal that people will experience greater personal fulfillment, creativity, joy, and significance?

Other criteria that could be used for assessing our choices and making decisions include "The Great Ends of the Church" (as articulated in the Book of Order), and the Biblical themes of liberation and freedom and reconciliation and responsibility.

Strong emotional responses are sparked when issues of change and preservation and priority-setting confront a community. These strong responses are not problematic if we anticipate them, bless them, and diffuse their power to dominate the decision-making process. Determining the tools (criteria) Unity will use for evaluating its choices is essential prior to initiating difficult discussions.

I hope this topic will elicit lively conversation among the congregation and our leaders! Let's talk to each other and keep talking in ways that move us forward.

Grace and peace,

Mark