



## **First United Methodist**

***Become a part of God's family at First UMC***

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*Vision: Hamilton First: a growing extended family sharing Christ's love  
in the heart of the city (A United Methodist Congregation)*

*Mission: To Know Christ and Make Him Known in the World*

June 10, 2010

Dear Friends,

We are just returning from Annual Conference, so I wrote this piece early, because I wanted you to have a HomeTouch while we are gone. I wanted you to know something about Annual Conference. Why do we have an Annual Conference? So that the church can communicate.

Annual Conference is as old as Methodism. When John Wesley began class meetings, he decided that he wanted to get his preachers together, annually. Thus the name, Annual Conference. At Annual Conference they had a time of worship, did study together, and looked at the "orders" of the church. Orders were really the rules by which we live.

We still do the business of the Annual Conference. We talk to one another and have wonderful worship. Unfortunately, too often it is talking at one another, instead of talking to. It can be hard in an assembly of 3,000 folks to have good conversation. Too often, people will split into dichotomous groups and say how the other group is wrong and they are right. It is easier to argue than to have serious conversation. I hope that will not be the fact this year. Too often it is. What is needed for a Conference, or a church for that matter, to work smoothly is good communication.

Good communication, one of the five areas that we as a church said needed some attention before we could become more vital. Why? There is an easy answer that is deeply true. Communication, good communication, takes work and too often we do not want to do the work that is needed.

Let's think about good communication for a minute. The first question is to which kind of communication are we referring. There are many different types of communication. Let's use a family as an example. There is the communication of schedules, tasks, etc. This would be called administrative communication. Then there is the communication of needs. How often has someone in a family said, "I need my special shirt clean for tomorrow." In the order of needs this might not be high, but given the emotional content, it becomes more of a priority. Thus, we have moved into the communication of feelings. We notice with children that one moment they may be crying and the next laughing. Both are important to hear. As adults, we still need to communicate feelings, such as "I love you." Then there are the communications of meaning. "We love each other, even when we disagree, that is what families do."

Part of having good communication is to be doing the same type of communication at the same time. If one person is trying to do feeling communication and another is trying to schedule, a conflict is bound to happen. If one person is very concerned about details and the other person is talking about the vision of what is happening, a conflict is bound to happen.

How often as a therapist was I listening to communications in the counseling session to find out the conflict was because people were offering different content than the others wanted. I began to talk about the four “C’s” in communicating. The four C’s are clarification, confrontation, comfort, and collaboration. I began to listen to the message given and the response as a way to see if people were using the same “C” in their communication. If they were not, there was natural conflict.

That is why good communication is so hard. We have to listen to one another and match what the situation calls for. Sometimes, often, it calls for give and take. If not, then there can be conflict.

I am concerned that in the church there is more often a tendency not to communicate so that we do not take a chance of causing conflict. After all, Christians never have conflicts, do they? OK, so we can put that in the trash can. Of course Christians have conflicts. Sometimes it is in our conflicts that the will and love of God become clearer. However, if we do not work through the conflict, we end up fractured. We can only work through conflicts when we work to have good communications with one another. Thus, in the church we need to continually work at good communications.

Now before you get concerned that there is a conflict in the church, let me say there is no conflict. We want to get our communications flowing more freely and clearly. For that to happen, we have to talk about how well we are doing in our communications. Where might we be avoiding saying something because we do not want to “offend”? Saying or not saying what we think, both can lead to miscommunications. Again, we have to continually work at good communications.

What insights do you have about the communications at the church? Are you getting the information that you need to hear? Are you feeling supported by your church family? Are you feeling the love of God expressed by your church family? Are you talking with the folks with whom you need to talk? Are we communicating clearly, helpfully, and appropriately?

Let me also remind you that prayer is communicating with God. How have your communications with God been going recently? Does it need any attention to be better? Maybe the communication needs to be a little more frequent, so that it flows a little more smoothly? Why not try to increase your communication as you walk with God this week? Have a good walk and a good conversation.

Grace and Peace

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peggy".

Rev. Peggy