

We Do This in the Name of the Risen Savior

Does everyone here watch TV? Do you watch current show or do you find yourselves streaming or watching reruns of past shows? What is or was your favorite TV show? If you are flipping through stations or the guide if you have cable, what show is usually your “go-to” show? Take a moment and think. Now, if you feel comfortable, turn and talk to someone and share. We will take two minutes. Would anyone like to share with the group?

How many people here have ever seen the old television show Bewitched? I am old enough to have seen some of the episodes on their first run but have seen almost all of them in syndication. One of my favorite characters was the neighbor, Gladys Kravitz. Gladys was known as the neighborhood “busybody” as she knew everyone else’s business, especially the Stephens who lived across the street.

Poor Gladys couldn’t get anyone to believe her about the goings-on at the Stephens. With the tongue-in-cheek ruse to “borrow a cup of sugar” (one would think she’d have bought some by now) she managed

to barge her way in to “see for herself” but could never prove anything, even when she was caught up in the madness. Her husband, Abner, would have to come and get her and remind her that these things wouldn’t happen if only she had worried about herself.

Often times, we can find ourselves in a similar predicament. We see things, either in our own neighborhood or even in our own families and we have to go and tell someone. We get caught up because “strange things are happening that cannot be explained” or someone is acting different than we are. Other times, the people may be acting or doing things that we are also doing but are not doing it with us. Why would they ever want to do that without us or as a part of us?

In their own way, the disciples of Jesus were caught up in the activities of others around them. They couldn’t figure out why or how someone could cure someone or cast out a demon in the name of Jesus of Nazareth and they weren’t traveling with them. Here is what you may not know. Other people traveled the area who would also baptize in the Jordan, preach that people had to repent and mend their ways, and

offered to “cure” or cast out demons from folks. But John voiced the concern of the group that there was a “renegade” group.

Do we consider other Christian denominations to be “renegade?”

How often have we been left to wonder, “What’s up with those

Catholics?” “What goes on in that Evangelical Church anyway?” “What

about those folks at the Baptist/Methodist/Episcopalian/Presbyterian

Church?” Heck, sometimes we are left to wonder about other

Congregational Churches. People from Southwick: how much did you

know about what goes on at First Congregational Church of Westfield?

People from FCC-W: how much did you know about what goes on in

Southwick? By now we have been to each other’s church services as

well as events. We have celebrated sharing a pastor, Southwick’s 250th

Anniversary, Pizza with the Pastor, Pasta with the Pastor, Picnic with the

Pastor, etc. And Southwick’s next big adventure starts in the next week

as we welcome Southwick Community Episcopal Church to share our

space while they discern their next move.

WE are blessed! We have our church homes. We know each other and we know that we all worship the same God through Jesus of Nazareth crucified and Christ Risen from the dead. Those other churches do the same thing, whether or not we believe it or they believe that we do. Together, we are believers! Together, we are salt for the earth!! Our being here is important because we have salt!! Because salt is “worth” something, Jesus tells us that we, too, are worthy! Others have salt and are also worthy. Jesus tells us, “Have salt in yourself and be at peace with one another.”

“In fact, the phrase itself is thought to be rooted in Ancient Rome where soldiers were sometimes paid with salt or given an allowance to purchase salt. Similarly, if a person uses the phrase “worth its weight in salt,” to describe an object, they are expressing that they think the item is worth the price they paid or that it otherwise holds immense value to them.” (Thespiceguyco.com)

Let us not be concerned with others as Jesus tells us that everyone who acts in His name will gain the reward. Perhaps the best advice comes from today's reading from the letter of James. James wrote to those people who were raised Jewish but also wanted to follow "the Way" as in the teaching of Jesus. There were many people who were "My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."

Let us continue our good work with our members. We can work together to bring "people home." Let us continue to practice our faith until we get it right. Keep visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, and spreading the Gospel message at 488 College Highway and at 18 Broad Street. Be salt! Let us continue to share the Word of God and break bread, or even pancakes, together.

Amen.