

We live in a fractious age made even more so because of the 2016 Presidential election.

Families have been torn apart. A rift has developed between lifelong friends.

Even churches have been experienced divisions in ways not experienced before.

Ministers have reported difficulty in preaching in the face of such divisions in fear that if they dare risk to bringing the Gospel to bear on current events a sizeable sector of their congregation will be offended and walk. Also, not saying anything at all about the present-day proceedings will result in another sector's annoyance and departure.

Clearly, Jesus did not shy away of speaking God's truth, even when doing so brought down the wrath of his home congregation upon him. But he also spent the next three years outside of religious institutions, choosing instead to go out to the people in their homes, workplaces and in the countryside. He went directly to the people.

I would not suggest that the answer is to abandon the church to remain true to the calling to preach the Gospel freely as the soul convicts one to preach.

What I do suggest is that we look to the other ways that Jesus built bridges between the divisions in his culture. Jesus created safe spaces for dialogue; dialogue that usually resulted in transformation.

I believe that should we risk conversation across divided lines we will discover that most people share the same values. Occasionally these shared values become transparent in our response to tragedy suffering; a response that is uniformly compassionate.

Yet, we need not wait for tragedy to be brought together. Our unity in Jesus Christ should sufficiently motivate us to hang together and work toward common understanding.

Blessings to you,

Rev. Alan Newton