

## BLESSINGS ALWAYS

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Association Minister Message

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*IDENTITY*. “Jesus asked them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’” (Mark 8:29, CEB). At an office last month, I noticed the person I was talking to looked like another friend of mine, even the same hair style, smile and conversation. I told him, “You have a twin who lives in Columbus.” His response was, “Oh,” and began a conversation about why I was in his office. We all have *IDENTITIES* that make us who we are, but it is more than just physical appearance. Yes, physical appearance draws us to certain people and certain physical features may lead to romantic love.

We *IDENTIFY* people important in our lives by the relationship we have established with them. We also *IDENTIFY* persons by their wisdom, intellect, kindness, harshness, misbehavior, family connections and faith expressions. Relationships and groups are formed with those having same characteristics. There is an expression, “*Birds of the same feather flock together.*” Churches have been established that draw members who express faith in certain manners, beliefs, economic status, ethnic or cultural “*sameness.*” On Sunday mornings the American church becomes the most segregated gathering in our society, an *IDENTITY* of sameness. The choice to be with people “*like me,*” and wanting to “*do worship*” that I am comfortable to do, misses the richness of God’s diversity in one another. However, worship is not about “*me/us*” but rather about Christ and the “*we*” together.

Jesus initially asks the disciples to report to Him what the crowds thought Him to be. It was like taking a poll and Jesus was *IDENTIFIED* by the crowd as important religious persons of faith coming alive. And then the zinger was asked, “*But who do you say that I am?*” Peter answered the question by declaring Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the Holy One. That question is also asked of us today and our response *IDENTIFIES* our core beliefs. Jesus calls us into a relationship that can change us and can change the world. Jesus is the Savior and demands of us living in communion with Him and having a relationship with others, caring for the creation in ways of love and stewardship. The word “*Christian*” means “*Christ-bearer*” and having that *IDENTITY* reflects the Christ in us and through us. At our baptisms we are given a new name “*Christian*” and our lives are Spirit-filled. God knows each one of us and all of us as family affirmed as precious in God’s sight. Claim your *IDENTITY* with Christ and be the Christ-bearer to others. *BLESSINGS ALWAYS.*