



WISCONSIN CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Building Up the Body of Christ

by Rev. Jane Anderson

I enjoy traveling across our beautiful state this time of year, seeing all the fall colors and taking in the gorgeous landscape. We really are privileged to live in such a beautiful place on this planet. I also greatly enjoy visiting and worshiping with our congregations in the conference. It is a privilege to be with you and journey alongside you as you minister in your various settings.

Our churches are filled with many faithful people who have experienced the love and grace of God and daily seek to live out their Christian calling extend God's love and grace to others in their community and beyond. It is a joy to witness Christ at work in and through so many people in our churches.

Yet, far too often I hear from people that they don't feel welcome, supported, encouraged on their faith journey by members of their church. In some places, disagreements and alienation have arisen creating feelings of tension and loneliness. In a few places, conflict has arisen and become so combative that members feel the need to leave for their own spiritual health and well-being. I grieve, as I know you do, when this happens. And please know that we in the conference are trying to assist our churches in distress through the Conflict Transformation Team and our field staff.

All of this has caused me to wonder aloud with you about the nature and purpose of the church and what does membership in our churches really mean? What are we really about as a community of faith? And how are we helping to build up the Body of Christ, rather than tearing it down? What are we doing to safe-guard our spiritual homes?

I know each of you will answer this in your own way and I look forward to hearing from you. Some of you have shared that your mission statement is always before you in worship and in meetings of the nature and purpose of your mission and ministry. Others of you have spoken to me about covenants which every member is asked to sign when joining. Some of you have talked to me about a re-covenanting Sunday every year in which members are reminded of who they are and whose they are through the waters of baptism and asked to re-commit themselves to Being the Church in particular ways. Yet, others have said that through their stewardship campaign, members are not only to pledge but to renew their membership and re-commit to how they will live out their faith in the year ahead.

We have different ways that we are church. My hope is that we continue to find intentional ways in which we, as members of the Body of Christ, can Be the Church that is inviting, welcoming, supporting, encouraging and challenging with a spirit of God's love and grace.

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.
Ephesians 4:11-13.

Peace,
Rev. Jane B. Anderson