

FROM PASTOR MARC'S DESK...

My friend, David LaMotte, who is an author, a folk singer, and peacemaking advocate once told me that “a meaningful relationship is made up of mutual risk. It can only be made up of that. If we want to connect with [those whom we care about], we have to take some chances...” I’ve been thinking about that a bit this week. What does that mean?

I suppose on some level, building community is risky. Opening yourself up to a new community, church, or group of friends, sharing our struggles with a close friend or loved one, or (I suppose) even lifting up prayer concerns in a semi-public way on Sunday morning can be a bit of a risk. You’re putting yourself out there, and you can’t always control how it will be received. Will I be embraced by the love and support of my community, or will I get hurt? It’s a risk. Maybe sometimes it feels a little safer to just keep our acquaintances safely on the surface level.

Being a faith community together has never been particularly easy. Jesus called a group of strangers to drop their nets and follow him. Jesus called Peter to step trembling out of the boat and walk with him on the surface of the water. Even from the very beginning of the human story, we are told that we were not created to live in isolation from one another. We were created to be relational. When God created Adam, God spoke, “It is not good that the [human being] should be alone” (2:18) - the first time in the creation stories, in fact, that we hear the words, “It is **not** good.” There is love, companionship, and relationship in the garden, but there are serpents, too. It is a risk.

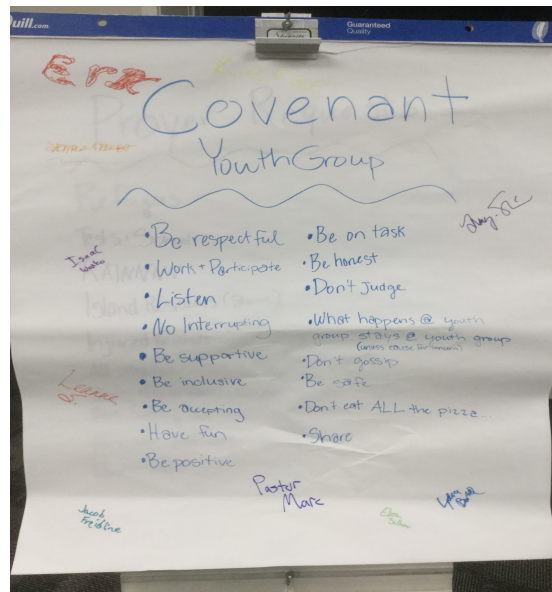
However, it is a risk that God took with us first. In the tradition of our faith, we talk an awful lot about what it means to be a people of covenant. A covenant is a concept that has deep roots in both the Old and New Testament. In Genesis 9, God made a covenant with Noah: “Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood...this is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you...for all future generations...between me and the earth...between me and you and every living creature of all flesh” (9:11-15).

In Genesis 15, God promised his covenant through Abraham and Sarah, and in the fullness of time, Luke tells us that Jesus gathered his disciples in the upper room, and after giving thanks to God, he broke bread and poured the cup saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (22:20).

A covenant is quite literally an agreement. It’s a relationship, and like any meaningful relationship, all parties involved depend on one another, and all parties involved are mutually at risk. The covenant doesn’t work if it’s one-sided

or if only one party is committed it. It depends on the risky proposition of mutuality. However, it is there that we may find the life that is good, rich, purposeful, and for which we were created and made. It is a risk, but it is a risk that God made with us first.

This past week, the youth group at OPC composed a covenant of their own. This covenant represents the promises that they have made to one another, and was written entirely by (and signed by) them. Many of our adults who have been participating in our “Called To Life” groups have also asked the questions of “What does it mean to be in covenant with one another in this ministry together?”



As a church, I hope that we will always be pondering what it means to more deeply be covenant people with one another. To be called into this life more deeply with one another. Whether it is dropping our nets and following this strange man from Nazareth, taking those first shaky steps out of the boat and out onto the waves, or reaching out to a neighbor, the life of being covenant people has always been a risky one. However, it is there that we may truly meet and encounter the God who has covenanted with us, who breathed the breath of life into our nostrils, and who calls us to life together.