

# Pastor Sailer's Page

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## CELEBRATING OUR UNITY IN DIVERSITY (OR IS IT DIVERSITY IN UNITY?)

*"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us" (Romans 12:3-6).*

What kind of God do we have? Some people have a very distorted image of God – that He is like a frowning Supercop or Principal looking to squash anyone who might be having a good time. Or maybe that He is a kindly Grandfather, who dotes on us, gives us what we want, but is generally not quite all-powerful, and all-loving...as evidenced by the disasters and alleged global warming. We know differently, don't we? God is all-powerful and He is all-loving. He saw us in our dire need as sinners. He sent Jesus. Jesus conquered sin, death and the devil out of love for each of us. That's the kind of God we have. But we know something else about Him – He's the Creator and He is creative. He's like an artist who fills the world with creatures like the porcupine and skunk and warthog and platypus, who lavishes the world with wildflowers, and butterflies and tropical fish more beautiful than any design on display in an art museum. That's the kind of God we have! He is a God who has created an incredibly diverse world, but where there is also an incredible unity, as creature is dependent upon other creatures. And so there is a great unity in the diversity around us!

It seems that God celebrates diversity and that God celebrates unity. It's the way He made the creation around us.

And it's the way He made us. What us am I talking about? Our congregation – one congregation -- with its 750 or so members. We are God's doing!

God has united us in our congregation: saving each of us through Christ (and only through Christ); calling us to faith by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel (and only by the Holy Spirit, through the Gospel). We hold to

the *Scripture Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone* tenets of the Reformation.

I celebrate this unity. It makes us solid and dependable. God has given us this unity.

But God has also made us diverse, and for a purpose. The members of our congregation come from different backgrounds. They have different occupations. We all have different personalities. We have different preferences.

I celebrate this diversity. It makes us...exciting; it gives us an ability to reach out into our individual spheres of influence, touching folks with the Gospel the others of us may not be able to reach.

What does God say in His Word about unity in diversity (or is it diversity in unity)? Read again Romans 12:3-6 at the start of this "Page." There, it seems that God celebrates our unity, and that God celebrates diversity. That's the way He made us in the Church, the Body of Christ.

He has done this for a purpose: *for the sake of the Gospel*. The Gospel – the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ. Our mission, as it relates to every one of us reading this, is to believe the Gospel, take the Gospel. It is to spread the Gospel. It is to build our congregation around the Gospel, working together as church workers and laypeople for the sake of the Gospel (always allowing for the fact that God has made each one of us different...different personalities, different talents, different responsibilities in this part of the Body of Christ).

This March I turned 56. I wonder if I have arrived at the point of being wise. I think I can say that I have learned this over the years –

- Respect the unity and the diversity – they are givens; it's the way God made us.
- Listen, be patient (we are diverse after all!).
- Know that God has gifted me, He has gifted you, He has gifted the person beside you in special and unique ways for work in His kingdom.
- Trust God; trust – do not judge – one another.
- Pray! For God's direction upon our work together...for God's blessing upon your work... pray that Christ and the Good News of salvation through Him be exalted in all we do.