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July 2021 Newsletter

The Life of the Church – Hostility Happens

I was asked some months ago to give a presentation for a conference which featured discussions of hostility. When I was asked to make this presentation, it was to be in the context of campus ministry. There was a foregone conclusion, perhaps, in the mind of the organizer, that people engaged in campus ministry deal with hostility a lot.

It is true that a campus pastor, and, for that matter, a parish pastor, ends up dealing with hostility. But frankly it isn't the way you might think. Granted, I have had the occasional protestor regale me with screams, and that has not been limited to life on campus. It has happened in church committee meetings. There's some hostility floating around.

But the greatest challenge for a pastor is not when people direct their anger toward the pastor. It may be a cringe-worthy incident, but we all know how to deal with that kind of display. We treat others with kindness and respect. We try to remember they are by nature bearers of God's image (Genesis 1-2), and we love and bless them (Matthew 5). It isn't rocket science.



What's more troubling to me is the fact that we are surrounded by people who are unhappy, who feel alienated, who give in to that sense of abandonment by becoming angry and hostile. When trying to deal with hostility, whether in campus pastor or parish pastor mode, my goal is to help others become less hostile.

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2 Chronicles 7:12-22 describes people who have departed from God's Name and who become a curse and a laughingstock. Their ideas and behaviors have led them to ruin. Verse 20 says, in part, "this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples" (NKJV). I fear that this is an accurate description of much of our current American society. It has become an object of ridicule.

How did this happen? The simple answer is that our world has departed from God's Word and is reaping the wind. Yet there's a more nuanced answer that I would propose we think about.

Classical rhetoricians identified three different modes of appeal, ways that we could make a persuasive argument. One they identified as *logos*, an appeal to reason. Another was *ethos*, an appeal to what is right. The third was *pathos*, an appeal to emotions. It's significant that these great thinkers considered that all three were necessary.

Let's take an example from a great spiritual classic, the local fire codes. A public building, such as a church building, normally is required to have smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, or possibly a sprinkler system. Why would this be? An appeal to *logos* says that there is a certain amount of protection necessary to notify people to evacuate the building and to try to contain a fire until additional help can arrive. An appeal to *ethos* says that we love and serve our neighbors in the church building by preventing them from enduring life-threatening conditions such as a fire. An appeal to *pathos* says that we would feel terrible letting our brothers and sisters in Christ perish in a fire. If we pay attention to all three appeals, we will very likely have an environment which is quite safe in case of a fire.

What if some of the modes of persuasion are missing? We end up with reason, ethics, or feeling in charge of our decisions, not informed by the rest of the tools of persuasion. The arguments become unbalanced and weak. Our conclusions, likewise, are unbalanced and weak.



Our culture, fed by a dependence on *pathos* over the last several decades, has a weak foundation. It may have some appropriate conclusions along with some inappropriate conclusions. But they are not conclusions that can be counted on. When we are not sure that our reasoning is solid, it's very easy to become uncertain. We then want to be right, so we may become defensive. Here comes the hostility!

How can we recover sanity? Through use of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. By having good reasons for our conclusions. By helping others build their life and philosophy on a solid foundation. This alone will breed confidence that we are living a consistent life in a world that makes sense. It breaks down the defensiveness and hostility.

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As we who are confident in Christ help others find the same confidence, we must make it not merely about feelings, not merely about ethics, not merely about reason, but about all three. Reason, ethics, and feelings all point to the reality of the Christian life, the security of redemption, the hope of resurrection.

In the end, the Christian helps others deal with hostility by loving and serving our neighbors. Only as we do that will our neighbors be able to break their hostility down and learn the perfect love of Jesus which casts out fear (1 John 4).

What Else Does a Campus Pastor Do in the Summer?

We're dug into the process of planning out what we can do of next year's work. Mizzou is actively holding summer welcome events and the International Center is trying to see what it can do to bring in and welcome a new crop of visiting scholars and students from all around the world. We've been in contact with a number of the different offices which serve incoming students. Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry wants to help!

At present it looks like we will have some more formally structured events by mid-August. Until then, we're recharging batteries, trying to find out what will be happening when, equipping volunteers, and continuing the everlasting work of building bridges with local congregations.

In some ways the campus looks empty. That doesn't mean nothing is happening.

Please pray for our community. We want to bring the comforting grace of Jesus to all we meet.

Wittenberg Door Financial Update

Thank you so much for your support! We've had some new contributors showing up recently. But there's still room for more! Just a reminder, the Wittenberg Door 300 has the number 300 because we can make our entire budget, including caring for a full-time pastor doing face to face pastoral ministry on the college campuses in Columbia Missouri if we have 300 regular contributors making a modest monthly donation. Your monthly support of \$30-\$50 can make an eternal difference in the lives of our collegiate communities. Please continue to invite your friends and associates to consider supporting this work.

During this time of cultural, economic, and educational uncertainty, with all sorts of voices calling students and faculty members alike to embrace a radical agenda which doesn't lead to confidence, stability, and fulfillment, it is more important than ever that we make much of Jesus, the one who gives eternal life that nobody can take away!

Though I'm serving a local church on a part time basis, I do have the ability to make a visit to a congregation that is thinking of providing support for this ministry. We can and will work out a visit so your congregation can hear how to be partners with us in providing the face to face pastoral care on campus that is our hallmark.

Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Checks mailed to us are deposited with no commission paid to any intermediary. Most of our contributions are actually received this way, but we can receive funds sent through Paypal or Google Pay as well. Giving is easy! Simply visit our website at www.wittenbergcomo.com and click on "about" and "support us."

Additional Benevolence

Please continue to pray with us, and send us suggestions, as we try to identify an additional benevolence project to engage in. We've built giving into the DNA of Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry. 10% of contributions go to the American Association of Lutheran Churches, our overseeing church body. In the past we have often found needs to which people could contribute. It takes money to support those who take the Gospel around the world.

While we seek to identify another project, please join with us in praying that the Lord would continue to raise up workers in His kingdom, particularly those who have a desire to serve as pastors to areas that would otherwise be underserved. The harvest is great and the laborers are few.

Upcoming Activities:

Thursdays at 12:30 pm – Lunch and Learn Bible discussion live at the MU Student Center

Sundays - Adult Bible Class (Galatians) 9:00 am, Divine Service 10:00 am, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Centralia MO

July 5-22 - Pastor Spotts on vacation, recovering from running much too fast!

We hope to learn more in the near future about welcome back activities planned by the University of Missouri, Stephens College, and Columbia College! They are definitely in the works!!

Watch the calendar, follow our Facebook page, and friend WDCM Chaplain on Facebook to see times and places where Pastor Spotts can be found around campuses in coffee shops or restaurants!

We always have something new at the website, the blog, and the activities calendar. Please be a friend on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. If you're in Columbia, let's get together on or near campus. Go to <https://www.wittenbergcomo.com/support-us.html> to provide financial support. The Wittenberg Door 300 needs you!