

Paul is writing a letter to the church at Ephesus. He is in prison in Rome and he is writing to people he has never met. But he has heard about them – good things and he does not cease to give thanks for them in his prayers.

Paul prays that “the eyes of your heart may be enlightened – that you may know the hope to which you are called.”

What does it mean – “the eyes of your heart may be enlightened?”

Our choir sang a Christmas anthem that I loved – “Twelfth Night.” It speaks about men seeing with shepherds eyes. I am sure if the anthem were written now, the author would use inclusive language – men and women need to see with shepherds eyes.

Shepherds eyes. I could look at a flock of sheep and see little, except a flock of sheep. But a shepherd would not only see the flock – a shepherd would know the sheep by name. The shepherd would know which sheep needed some salve on a sore spot. A shepherd would know which sheep might wander off. To see with shepherd’s eyes – is like seeing with enlightened eyes.

I grew up with the saying, “There is more to it than meets the eye.” It has to do with context, history, experience. We see beyond the image the eye shows us. We might see a group of children and notice they were all kindergarten age. We would see in general. But the kindergarten teacher would see Jane and Sarah, Grissom and Jack.

“With the eyes of your heart enlightened – so you may know the hope to which you are called.” I tried to think that with our eyes to our heart enlightened, how would we define our call as Pilgrim Church.

Open. I believe Pilgrim to be a place where people are welcome to come explore their religious thought and ideas. We do not ask people to subscribe to a creed a set document of faith and belief. We are Christian. We try to be followers of Jesus. But we don’t think everyone understands and interprets the Christian faith in the same way. We may be liberal or conservative, literal or symbolic in our way of reading the scripture, but we are all still thinking about how we are called to live out the faith. We don’t spend our thought and time condemning Buddhist, Jews, - people of other faith traditions. We are open in our way of trying to understand the hope to which we are called.

Inclusive. I believe Pilgrim to be a place that welcomes others, that reaches out to include others.

This is not just in our thinking. I believe our call includes people of different races and cultures. On the 18th we will participate in the call of the United Church of Christ to have a conversation about race.

It will not be a session to exclude others – rather it will be a time to discern what it means to be inclusive.

I think our inclusive stance is our calling when we reach out to persons of different sexual orientation. This inclusive stance does not mean that we just tolerate gay and lesbian people. Our Open and Affirming statement is just that. We are open and affirming to the gay and lesbian community. I get email from gay and lesbian’s asking if they would be welcome here at Pilgrim. I believe “with the eyes of our heart enlightened” that this inclusive stance helps us understand the hope to which we are called.

Justice. Pilgrim stood firm in the civil rights battle of the 60’s. The UCC church was among the first to ordain women and was the first to ordain a gay pastor. Social issues that work toward justice have long been a part of our calling. Poverty, education, immigration are justice issues.

I believe that our calling as a church is one that is informed as we see with eyes that enlighten our hearts. It is a calling that asks us to look to context, experience, scripture, reason and history. This hope to which we called is who we are as the People of God.

Today is communion Sunday. Words we use at communion call us to remembrance. I believe this sacrament helps us with our calling. As we remember those who have walked with us, as we remember those who do walk with us on this journey of faith, we are able to see more clearly this hope to which we are called.

Are there people you remember today who have helped inform your journey of faith? I suspect that like me,

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An open and affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ

communion calls to you to remember this cloud of witnesses who have helped you live out this hope to which we are called. Who do you remember today? The sacrament of communion reminds us of the life and ministry of Jesus. We also are reminded of our calling in the lives of others who have shared and who do share this journey of faith with us. There are people we remember in our personal lives who remind us of who we are as God's people. You can name those today in your own life as well as I can name those in my life. In the life of our congregation, I remember Barbara Manning,

Elaine Shealy, Clyde Willhem. I remember those like the Bell's who have moved to another part of the country. People like Trent, Abraham and Maria. I know that April remembers Adrianne today and we list those we remember.

"With our eyes of our hearts enlightened, let us remain faith to the hope to which we are called."  
Our journey of faith is more than meets the eye. It includes history, experience and people who journey with us as we live out this hope God has for us.