

**So What Does the Label “Progressive Christian Mean?”
Sunday Nov. 19 2017 – Holy Cross – Pastor Dawn**

Working for weeks now to settle on a vision for our congregation.

After 3 Visioning sessions, we focused in on a shared vision.

Church Council took that work and created a draft statement that we hope articulates our vision.

“Holy Cross will strive to be an inclusive, compassionate, justice-seeking community that provides opportunities to explore and engage Progressive Christianity.”

Council has also prepared an outline that begins to sketch out the priorities that we might want to adopt so that we can focus on what we will need to do in our to live into our Vision.

Council is recommending that we prioritize:

- **Creating liturgies that engage Progressive Christianity through music, preaching, ritual, and art for use in our congregation and beyond.**

Utilizing social media to share our resources.

Providing learning opportunities in Progressive Christianity both locally and beyond.

Utilizing social media to share our resources.

Seeking global justice through education and advocacy.

Partnering with other congregations, the ELCIC, CLWR, Kairos, Inn From the Cold, Crosslinks, LOFT, and others as we learn about and advocate for justice, locally, nationally, and internationally.

- **Extending explicit invitations to seniors in our community and beyond.**

Over the course of the next 3 to five years, we are going to focus upon becoming:

A Church that:

inclusive, compassionate, justice-seeking community

that provides opportunities to explore and engage Progressive Christianity.”

So what do we mean by: “Progressive Christianity”

Over the course of the past few weeks I have overheard and been part of quite a few conversations in which all sorts of people have all sorts of ideas about what it means to be a “Progressive Christian.”

Some of those ideas make sense when you consider the journey that we have been on for the past decade or so.

But some folks are confused or mistaken about what exactly “Progressive Christianity” is.

Still others aren’t exactly sure that they want our congregation to embrace the label, “Progressive.”

The term “Progressive Christianity” is problematic for several reasons.

Some people think it’s rather presumptuous to claim to be “progressive”; as if we are moving forward, making progress, while others are not.

While others claim that it is somewhat redundant for Christianity to call itself progressive because Christianity in and of itself is by its very nature is progressive.

It’s a bit like calling a barber a hair barber as if there is any other kind of barber other than a hair barber.

I agree that the word “progressive” can sound arrogant and it is also redundant.

In fact one thing that most “progressive Christians have in common is being uncomfortable with the label “progressive”.

Most progressive Christians don’t really like labels of any kind.

Labels don’t always give us an accurate picture.

I used to think I knew what a conservative and a liberal was.

But those labels don’t help me much because conservatives these days don’t seem to be interested in conserving anything and liberals appear to be embodying to all sorts of conservative policies.

Some labels are just plain useless, while other labels don’t mean what they once meant.

But as uncomfortable as we are with labels, the truth is, we keep being labeled and if we are honest, we can’t do without labels.

Do you remember when you were a kid and you were sick?

Didn’t your Mom always have something to sooth you?

My Mom used to give us ginger ale.

To this day whenever I have an upset stomach, I always reach for a ginger ale.

Now imagine if there were **no labels?**

Types of ginger ale – types of progressive

Christians.

- **Ginger root – our roots in historical** Christianity – the Mystics – Lutheran Reformation
- Martin would today be called a progressive Christian

Progressive Christianity: seeks to reform Christianity using all that we have learned:

Scholarship:

Science - all that we have learned about the cosmos

- All that we have learned about the Earth
- All that we have learned about what it means to be human
- All that we have learned about the bible
- All that we have learned about theology
- All that we are learning about the faiths of others
- How does this knowledge impact Christianity?
- What doctrines have lost their meaning?
- What traditions no longer make sense?
- What beliefs about the nature of God, about the life of Jesus, no longer reflect what we what we know to be true?
- Progressive Christians are willing to question tradition
- Progressive Christians accept that humans are diverse in nature
- Progressive Christians put a strong emphasis on Micah 6:8
- **simply do justice, love kindness, and humbly walk with your God.**
- Progressive Christianity puts a strong emphasis upon social justice, advocating for the poor and the oppressed, caring for the environment
- Progressive Christianity believes that Jesus taught a way of being in the world
- Christianity is not about believing in Jesus but following the path that Jesus trod, being compassionate, speaking out for justice, mercy, and tolerance
- Progressive Christians believe that Jesus offered a pathway, but that other teachers in other faith traditions taught similar pathways
- Progressive Christians look to the vision of God that Jesus spoke of as LOVE
- Progressive Christians challenge the worship of a personified God

- Progressive Christians look to the Christian mystics as they approach the Mystery that we call God
- There is so much more that I could tell you about what it means to call oneself a Progressive Christian
- But here's why I am excited that this vision
- When I was a kid, I sometimes had didn't feel well, and my Mom could comfort me with a little warm, often flat ginger ale.
- But these days, at the grand old age of 60 my aches and pains remind me all too well that I'm closer to the end of my life than I care to think about.
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- O sure I might get twenty or thirty more years , but if they are anything like the last twenty or thirty years they will pass in a flash
- I don't have time for flat ginger ale, I need some spicy ginger ale – something with a little kick – something that's prepared to ask the really tough questions
- What's it all about?
- Why am I here?
- Where am I going?
- What does it mean to die?
- What will happen to me when I die?
- Will I survive my death?
- Flat ginger-ale offers me precious little comfort.
- There are things to do before we go, right here and right now.
- Jesus said I have come that you might have life and live it abundantly.
- I think there are a whole lot of people out there who are very thirsty for something with a little kick to it.
- Holy Cross has proven itself to be a place where questions are asked, scholarship is appreciated, traditions are challenged, reforms are implemented – we helped change the ELCIC
- We are uniquely placed to serve our neighbours something with a little kick to it
- Does this mean that everything we hold dear is going to disappear?
- **Ginger snaps?**