



Thinking Outside the Box (While Loving the Box)

August 1, 2022

Six months ago, in a “Looking Out My Window,” we focused on the concept of possibility thinking vs. problem-solution thinking. I want to return to that theme for the next few weeks.

If you think of a faith community as a living system, like a tree, that system has within it amazing possibilities. Those possibilities can be brought to the surface and actualized through community conversation. Life in community certainly be messy and involve conflict. You could think of Paul’s letters as exercises in conflict resolution; so often he appeals to communities to practice kindness, love, forgiveness, and to avoid harsh speech. But, the Spirit will lead us toward possibilities and newness if we maintain that focus on possibility and listen for the Spirit into our conversations. Even difference can enrich us if we pay attention and listen deeply to each other, treasuring difference rather than disdaining it.

Can we create a new future at Christ Church? Can we envision that future together? The trick is to do that without merely reacting to our past problems and having our future dominated by solving the problems our past has given us? I discovered in launching a new church that even a vision statement can be a subtle form of problem solving—looking at the foibles of the traditional church and casting a vision for something different that actually was controlled by past experience.

Possibility thinking avoids the retribution thinking involved in problem solving. On that model, if we have a problem, that problem exists because of failure in the community. Someone is to blame for that failure. A major part of the driving energy in problem-solution thinking arises from blaming. Our current social and political landscape teems with blaming and problem/solution thinking.

Back to our analogy of the tree. Any healthy tree will have dead limbs. Occasionally, you may have to trim larger ones before they fall off and damage a power line or a house. But, a healthy tree primarily boasts live limbs, ample canopy, and a plethora of new green. Focusing on enhancing the tree’s health would be primary; removing dead limbs, a form of problem solving secondary to that primary focus.

I invite you to join me in focusing on the new green. We might have to do a bit of problem solving, but even then we will avoid retribution thinking. Our problem solving will be a way of enhancing possibilities. Where is the new green? Where is new life appearing? There we will focus.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David W. Perkins+".

David W. Perkins+, Interim Rector