

I. Advanced Organizer

- A. In 1989, the film ***Dead Poets Society*** was released. I was 12 years old. It came out right in a formative season in my life, and this film captivated me. It was my favorite movie for many, many years. Something was sparked as Robin Williams taught these young men, igniting a love of poetry and self-expression in them. **And I resonated deeply with the character of Neil, the young man who discovered a love of acting as he brought Shakespeare to the stage.** I was already the lone theatre nerd at my middle school, the one who didn't play sports but was in one play after another after another. This film validated that identity and took it deeper. **Had a vision of myself as a Shakespearean actor.** That vision led me to compete in high school dramatic Shakespeare competitions. I played Puck like him in High school. It led me to audition for colleges and pursue theatre as a potential vocation.
- B. **A vision has power.** While the outlets of my passions have changed, there was something that was stirred the first time I saw that film that **has remained true and carried me forward** through the seasons of my life and my sense of vocation - an appreciation of art and personal expression. A value for poetry, music, writing. **A longing to express inner truths through words.** All of this was sparked the first time I saw those boys get on those desks and call out "O Captain, My Captain."
- C. Well, I bring up the topic of vision today because we're **wrapping a series on community and doing life together**, and I'd like to end this series and transition into the next one with a conversation about vision for Haven. I think at certain points in our growing and maturing we **need those fresh pictures that we can resonate with**; they gel with what's already true but they help us see where it might take us; similar to myself as a twelve year old looking to understand what my pull towards theatre might be about. I've had a sense lately that Haven as a community is in a similar place of needing fresh vision to further grow and develop.
1. Been in a process of having conversations about this for the last couple of months with a number of folks throughout Haven.
 - a) In the beginning, we felt called to start something. A church that we liked and wanted to be a part of. But more than that.
 - b) Our identity has been evolving as we've gone.
 - c) A year ago started service, which helped more people find us. But the vision to start a group that puts on services is no longer enough.
 2. **Who are we? What makes Haven unique? "What is Haven's distinct gift to offer the East Bay?"** Why does Jesus have us here? What is he inviting us into? Reason we are drawn together and are drawing others to be together with us.
- D. In seminary, I had a professor who had written a book called, **"Between Two Truths"**. Recognizes that often truth is found most clearly in the tensions. Not black or white but gray.
1. I've begun to get a sense that the reason sometimes our identity and mission seem hard to articulate is because what we're called to be is found in the tensions.
 2. I have a pitch at a vision. Best described with a venn diagram. Three core values that seem pretty relevant to Haven. Different ones of them resonate more strongly to different ones of us, but as I've been in conversation with folks, some version of these three seem often to be in the mix.
 3. Gonna start by positing the three. Then look at a passage in Scripture that I think best makes the case for these three dwelling in tension. Then we'll take some time to consider the three a little more deeply, the implications of the various intersections, and the unique

place that might be found holding these three in tension. Then we'll have time for some Q and A or discussion.

4. I'm gonna suggest that the three core values Haven as a community of faith is holding in tension are these: being Jesus-centered, diverse, and safe.

- II. Paul seemed to be navigating similar tensions when he was counseling some of the churches he worked with. Where this is powerfully illustrated is his letter to the church in Corinth, a famous passage in 1 Corinthians 12-13. The context is he is speaking about spiritual gifts and how they are valued in the church - should some be emphasized over others? But clearly the metaphor he uses to consider these questions has broader implications than what we think about spiritual gifts. It's ultimately about the tensions we face when we consider life together.

A. 12 The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. 13 Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

14 Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. 15 If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? 18 But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. 19 How strange a body would be if it had only one part! 20 Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. 21 The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."

22 In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. 23 And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, 24 while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. 25 This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. 26 If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

27 All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it." (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

1. Paul also seemed to get that inherently **what he was calling the early church to was to live into tension**. And in order to illustrate that tension, he reached for a **metaphor that could help his audience visualize the tension he was naming**. He described a community that was **diverse and was united**. A community that had distinctive components but that worked together to serve a common purpose. A community in which all were included and needed, but there was recognition that each distinctive part could not necessarily be treated the same. There was tension.
2. This metaphor came from the ancient world. Seems to be based on a **fable of Aesop, "The Belly and the Members"**. The members of the body begin to rebel because they think the stomach doesn't do enough work. But they soon realize, if they deprive the stomach, everyone suffers.
3. **Paul adapted this metaphor and took it a step further**. The various parts aren't just held together by circumstance. **They are held together by Jesus**. A distinct identity has been

formed where people from various backgrounds and a diversity of experiences have been included into a common identity, **cleansed and initiated into the person of Jesus himself**. And yet, even as they become one and take on that identity of members in Christ's very body, there remains a distinctiveness to the various parts that makes the body itself more effective.

4. So how might this passage illustrate the three values in tension I posited? In very broad strokes:
 - a) **It's the body of Christ** - the whole metaphor is centered in what it means to claim faith in Jesus
 - b) **It's diverse - that's the idea of the many parts coexisting.**
 - c) **It's safe - none of the parts are excluded for looking different.** Everyone is cared for as part of the body.

III. **Exploring the Values.** In the weeks to come, a talk on each of these. Today, a broad overview

A. Jesus-centered

1. Sees Jesus as uniquely helpful in connection with God
2. Pursues interactive connection with Jesus through the Holy Spirit
3. Bible plays a significant role in informing that connection.
4. Builds on Christian orthodoxy, while recognizing the complexity of interpretation

B. Diverse

1. Makes space for people from a variety of backgrounds
2. Includes a multiplicity of races, ethnicities, different abilities, orientations, gender identities, income levels, levels of education, faith backgrounds, worship preferences, political perspectives, ages, level of belief and doubt, family structures, etc.
 - a) "In this community there is equal space for every race, every ethnicity, and every orientation. There is room here for rich and poor, left and right, belief and doubt."

C. Safe

1. Recognizes the impact of trauma in faith communities.
2. Seeks to provide space for healing and restoration to community
3. Allows people to discern beliefs and practices that are helpful for them, without fear of judgment or condemnation

IV. **Exploring the Intersections**

A. Jesus Centered and Diverse = Many Multiethnic or "Welcoming but not Affirming Churches"

1. Believes mosaic of humanity reflects body of Christ
2. Centered-set alone
3. Allows for some diversity, but the burden of assimilation is placed unequally on marginalized people
4. Myths like "color-blindness" persist
 - a) Deborah Jian Lee's article: "Betrayed at the Polls, Evangelicals of Color at a Crossroads"

"The fact that 81 percent of white evangelicals supported a candidate who channeled white nationalism is not lost on minority believers. Nor is the unending news of travel bans, appointments of white nationalists, mass deportations and racial hate crimes. It has forced a reckoning.

Today, believers of color are redefining their relationships with white evangelicalism in ways that could dramatically shift the landscape. Already, people of color make up a

larger portion of the entire American Christian population than before, and church growth experts predict they will make up the majority of the Christian population after 2042. And their values are largely at odds with the white evangelical support for Trump; pre-election surveys showed that nonwhite evangelical Protestant voters, which included black, Hispanic and Asian-Pacific Islander Protestants, supported Clinton over Trump by a very wide margin (67% vs. 24%), according to the Public Religion Research Institute.

So while white evangelicals captured the election, they may have lost their fellow believers, the very people who could keep their churches, denominations and institutions from the attrition that has many Christian institutions and leaders genuinely worried for the future. These days, evangelicals of color are talking next steps. Their endeavors run the gamut, but the ones gaining steam include leaving evangelicalism altogether, reframing the evangelical world as a mission field as opposed to a place for spiritual nourishment, creating ethnic safe spaces or staying firmly planted in evangelical community to combat racism from within. It's too early to tell which will prevail, but the urgency and organization happening within communities of color point to a fundamental shift in the evangelical landscape."

B. Diverse and Safe = (Secular) Justice Organizations

1. Recognizes that in order to be safe for all, must deal with structural inequalities
2. Intersectionality is acknowledged and addressed by all
 - a) "Intersectionality is a term coined by American civil rights advocate Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw to describe overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination. Intersectionality is the idea that multiple identities intersect to create a whole that is different from the component identities."
 - (1) my experience as a white woman is different than a woman of color, who has increased layers of marginalization, and different than trans woman of color - one of the most vulnerable and marginalized people today

C. Safe and Jesus-Centered = Monocultural Churches

1. Safe spaces for people to make meaningful connection with God and others
2. Vast majority of people are same race, orientation, etc.
3. Particularly for marginalized people, provides a helpful place to heal from the burden of assimilation in mixed settings
 - a) Christena Cleveland in "Disunity in Christ" -
 - (1) "*The segregated black church is an outcome of centuries of ongoing oppression from higher-status Christians, namely white Christians. In order to achieve true unity between blacks and whites, the status differences and historical and ongoing oppression must be addressed and reversed.*"

V. Living In the Tension of All Three

A. Jesus-Centered, Diverse, and Safe = Call of Haven

1. Centered-Set with an awareness of structural inequalities

- a) recognize that saying "all are welcome" isn't enough. Need to consider how we help all have equally unobstructed paths pursuing Jesus
- b) Paul in speaking of the different parts of the body doesn't assume a "one size fits all approach". Different body parts are treated differently. Some need to be regarded with more care than others, recognizing that what works for some, isn't the same for others. Some parts are not regarded as much honor by their nature, we need to give them

greater care. Other parts don't need that kind of care....a lot of resonance when we think about how we consider including majority culture folks verse more marginalized people

2. Burden of cultivating safety for all equally shared

- a) means everyone is giving up a degree of comfort. No one is as safe as they'd be in a more homogenous space. But our collective choice to value one another's safety makes all of us more safe.

3. Actively pursues diverse inclusion at all levels

- a) This is why it matters that leadership is diverse - from pastoral leadership, to board, to small group leaders, to worship, etc. We want the tension of safety plus diversity at work in all areas of shaping the community.
- b) Representation matters.

B. How might this be possible? For Paul...it's all about embodied love.

1. "But now let me show you a way of life that is best of all.

If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. 3 If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing."

- a) Paul is reminding them that it doesn't matter what qualifications they think they have for spiritual authority. All of it's worthless if they can't love one another well.

- b) In our context this could easily be paraphrased thus:

(1) "If I've studied my Bible backwards and forwards and can answer any theological question, but don't love others, all of my knowledge is useless. If I'm as woke as can be, understanding all the issues of implicit bias and structural inequality, but I don't love others, my insight does no one any good. If I am as openminded and nonjudgmental as possible, but don't love others, my perspective is pointless."

- 2. So what does he mean by love? Here it comes. This is about life together more than about married people. Read it with that in mind.

"4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5 or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. 6 It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

8 Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever! 9 Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture!10 But when the time of perfection comes, these partial things will become useless.

11 When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. 12 Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.

13 Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love."

3. All of these values will ultimately pass away - how we do church, what we focus on, what our values are, what our goals are, all of these are temporary - of this life alone. **But the love that holding these three things in tension requires us to demonstrate...That has eternal significance.**

VI. As we wrap, what do you think of this vision? Does it make sense to you?

- A. Where do you naturally see yourself? What values or intersections are you most comfortable with? Which ones are more challenging for you? Which ones might Jesus be inviting you to grow in?
- B. Ways were gonna be exploring this throughout the rest of the spring and summer
 1. 3 week series on 3 core values
 2. July and 1st half of August - "Back to basics" series - short talks with discussion period, examining the fundamentals of Jesus centered faith through this lens. Does it hold up?
 3. Pressing in spiritually through listening prayer and worship. "Envisioning Prayer" group. Meet 5 times June - August.