Christ Church UCC, Annville PA

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Pastor Tony Fields

**Never Stop Learning**

Who said never stop learning because life never stops teaching?

It is our job to create ourselves. As a baby begins its journey in life it learns to nurse, get its parents attention by crying, crawls, walks, talks, and eventually inform the family that the “terrible two’s” is near and will have you sitting at the edge of your seats.

Have you ever recalled asking yourself, when do babies start walking and how does it develop?

However, before babies can walk, they want to acquire the strength and coordination to maintain a vertical posture on their own. They are learning to get rid of their insecurities and trust their abilities to walk. They also expect to be able to bear most of their weight – at least momentarily – on one foot in front of another. A baby never stops learning.

Here are some of the quotes that are listed in my iPhone notes: “Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.” “Your attitude, not your aptitude, will determine your altitude.” “If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.” “The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn …and how to change.”

Humans have the inherent abilities for development, growth, and seeking ways to improve and cultivate in a society. While our ancestors have been around for about six million years, the modern form of humans only evolved about 200,000 years ago. We’ve been able to survive in all kinds of settings, environments all over the world, pandemics past, and brutality of social, economic, environmental, and racial injustices. Perhaps we are being called to learn better ways of interaction.

Life has a way of teaching us, if we are willing to be students. Human beings are the only life on earth that has the incredible capacity to change the course of life. No other life form can do this. Every life except humans has to operate by instinct and genetic code. (John Rohn) As our educational school system stands on the heels of uncertainty it is important the church pray for them.  It is also important for the church to pay attention to what is happening all around us. One day our children and children’s children will receive a gift or a curse from us. I wonder, will they stand up with outstretched arms and say, thank you foreparents for how you managed and were stewards of what God given us. In Genesis 1:26 it states, “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’
Or will they hold their heads down and say, ‘Lord why did they forsake to live in their dominion.’”

Henry Kissinger says it best, “We have to change dramatically to meet the needs of today.” Life wants us to, or should I say demand, that we move from the passive attitudes of what pre-pandemic taught us. We have to deal with what is staring us directly in the face. Biblical teaching invites us from being little gods of ourselves and living as faithful beings while fulfilling the needs of others.

The narrative is changing from what I can do for others, to more importantly what I can do with others. Imagine a church mirroring its community. The idea that we value what you (the other) bring to the table which will help all of us to grow continually and realize what God is doing in the life of the community.

All through the Bible, we see humanity's performance and a constant progression of society while interacting with each other. God inspired humans to dictate on paper that either through words, body, and spirit, that we are never alone. However, we still neglect to rely on these promises. Refusing to change can be death to our existence. Yes, the change may feel like a loss; however, learning and growing help develop and change into something new.

The church is an organism. Yes, it is an organization; however, its vitality is not ours alone. The world is not simple, and at times, it can be ugly as we stand in our polarization of “it's my way or the highway.” Our forefathers and mothers invested in the church to be beacons of hope and pillars in a community. Reflect on our history, and you will see how believers value opportunity rather than security. Our default button launches us to safety and security living in the familiar.

However, now it is no longer acceptable to worship only behind the four walls, but in every aspect of our beings. We can worship in our homes, parks, online, in the building, or even in our cars. The pandemic helped the church to understand that modal, location, time, nor the stubbornness of humanity cannot contain God. Yes, God is omnipotent and omnipresent.

We must move to lateral thinking. Yes, find ways of being the post-pandemic church. Lateral thinking is the solving of problems by an indirect and creative approach, typically through viewing the issue in a new and unusual light. I will close with this quote from
Karl Barth. He said, “Religion is the possibility of the removal of every ground of confidence except confidence in God alone.” Perhaps we stopped learning because our confidence is in ourselves rather than in our God. Therefore, sisters and brothers, I’m telling you, I beg of you: never stop learning.

Perhaps the underlying question that is facing us today is: what are we really afraid of? What are our insecurities? Do we really trust that God is with us? And I’m saying to you, don’t leave it to chance. If you want to see a different result, then do things differently.

Amen and amen. All I’m saying to you, is don’t stop learning. Take every moment, every action, everything that’s going on around us, to see that God is still with us and He desires to see us change.

Amen and Amen.