

“Lead Courageously”

Sermon by Robb McCoy

The United Methodist Church Council of Bishops has created a new Guiding Vision for the UMC. For the next three weeks we will examine the three main parts of this statement: love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously. Philip, Ananias, and Peter exemplified these ideas in the book of Acts.



The United Methodist Church forms disciples of Jesus Christ who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously in local communities and worldwide connections.

I sat at our table making buttons for most of the afternoon yesterday our ACQC table. We probably gave away a hundred buttons. Using the red button press pictured here, I made them as we chatted with people. We had a handful made at all times so people could pick one out. They were certain designs that I thought would be meaningful to people. We also had some blanks and markers so people could draw their own. I would then cut out the circle and press it into a button that could be worn. Most adults took a premade one, but most kids were excited when I told them they could make their own.

As they colored the little circle, they would often go outside the lines or color in the part that wouldn't show up in the pin. “They're doing it wrong,” I once whispered to Sarah as a little girl made her creation. Sarah just laughed at me and said, “let her do it.” When she was done I worried that she would be disappointed when she saw her button.

I was wrong. Her eyes lit up, she smiled wide and was incredibly proud as Sarah pinned it to her shirt. Another girl drew a small heart right in the middle of the circle and then only colored the edge, which I knew would end up crimped around the edge of the pin. I knew she would be disappointed. “She's doing it wrong,” I said again.

When she saw her finished product, she was disappointed. The meticulous colors she drew had been crimped around the edge. Her face sunk. “Look at the edge,” Sarah told her, holding up her button, “That's where the colors are.” The girl smiled. It was as if she had made a secret piece of art and only she knew that the beauty was at the edge.

In the passage we read today, Peter was making a button from scratch. The leaders had their buttons ready. They understood the designs that made sense to them. They had their pre-made ideas of what it meant to follow Christ, but Peter came up and was making something brand new.

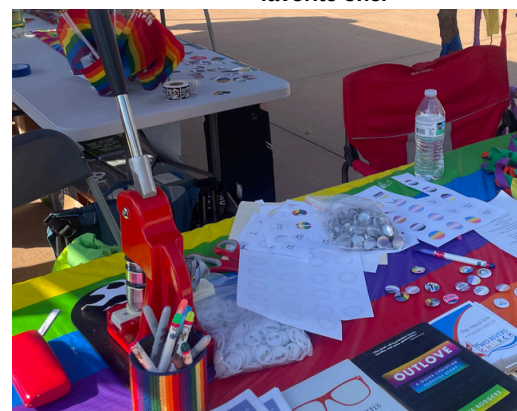
Peter had the courage to think differently. He had the courage to be open to new ideas, new people, and he saw that the Holy Spirit was truly



A lot of these pins are available in the sanctuary. Free to take you want one.



This is the one I made. Turns out, it was my favorite one.



making something from scratch. “But he's doing it wrong,” they whispered to each other. It turned out what he was making - with unlikelyst of partners in Saul, Samaritans, an Ethiopian eunuch, and the Centurion Cornelius, was more beautiful than any of their pre-made pins.

That is the kind of courage the church still needs. We can provide some structure - the press, the parts, the markers - but we need to have the courage to let people make something new. We can't worry if they're “doing it wrong.” It takes courage to trust the Spirit is doing something new. Peter stood in front of his friends and told them something very brave - he changed his mind. He learned something new. He looked to new places and found something beautiful.

It takes courage to look to the edges, but that's where the beauty is.