
From Pastor Jayneann's Pen

Pastor Jayneann McIntosh

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I don't know if you read my blog or not, but if you do, you may have seen a post where I talked about personal theology. (Without self-promoting, here's the address if you'd like to check it out – fiercejoyandhope.blogspot.com.)

As I understand human development, when we're young we accept what we're told in a rather concrete way. "The earth is round." Really? Okay. "Step on the crack, you break..." No. No. And again, no. "You'll feel better in the morning." How does she know? "Goliath was a giant." Yes, that last one gets us into the realm of faith and religion, because as we grow up, we come to question things we once accepted – about the world and people, and also about faith stories, religion and God.

Everyone has a theology, though those who claim not to believe in God may label it ideology. Conversations often hit a bump here since most people don't think about having such a thing. But we do. Our personal understandings of God, the church, and such help us as we try to make sense of life. Those of us with faith learn we can lean on it as we ask existential questions, like:

- Who am I? What's my purpose?
- What is the meaning of life? And why do we take life for granted?
- How do I decide what's right and wrong? Should we be punished for wrongdoings? Are we?
- Why do people suffer?

I value the notion of Personal Theology. It helps me come to terms with the bad stuff. It allows me to question doctrines that just don't fit my understanding of God or creation, humanity or justice. I don't advocate a cafeteria-options kind of faith, as in "I'll try a little of this and a bit of that," but, when confronted with a biblical text, or someone else's interpretation of faith that clearly seems unGodly, it helps when we have a core understanding like, *God is love, or God is a just God.*

Going a step further, churches have theologies as well. They help us understand God's call for us in the communities where we serve. We need to regularly ask ourselves questions like:

- What is First Church's theology?
- Who are we? What is absolutely a part of our identity?
- What is God calling us to be?

This month, we'll be considering, what makes us, us. Labor Day Sunday, I'll speak about my own personal theology, and begin to connect that to yours and to ours as

a faith community. We'll continue through the next weeks considering things like mission, vision, stewardship and hospitality.

I trust that you're as eager as I am for Wausau: First to continue to be a vital part of the communities we live in. You know where you've been and might have ideas about where we're headed. Let's see what develops as we put all of this together. Knowing who we are and what God intends for us to be doing are important steps.

Shalom.

