

Provocative. Inspiring. Irksome.

Got a favorite word? Specifically, got a favorite adjective – a favorite word for describing things? Zany. Restful. Cool. Logical. Prodigious. Melodious. Sincere. Many-hued. More specific yet, got a favorite word for describing the *church*.

Over the years I've served as your pastor, we've talked a lot about the main things a church is supposed to do: our core functions. Just this past Lent we talked about our membership vows, how we promised to support the ministries of the church through our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness. In our Staff Parish Relations Committee, as we have thought through our staffing needs this year, we have come to focus on the “Four Core” functions of a church: Worship, Faith Formation, Nurture, and Outreach.

But all these words we have bandied about are nouns. And as necessary as these things are for a church, it is possible to have all of them – Sunday worship, Sunday School classes, care among members, opportunities to serve – and have them just....*sit there*. So this summer we are going to talk, not about the *nouns*, but about the *adjectives*. What kind of worship does a lively church have? *Passionate* worship. What kind of care does a lively church have? *Profound* care. Take a look at our worship themes for the summer months and you'll get the picture.

These ideas are coming from two places. First, they grow from the conversations that the Staff Parish Relations Committee have had and that Jerry Morris and I have continued. Second, they come from a book by Robert Schnase called “Five Practices of Faithful Congregations.” A lot of United Methodist Churches have found in his book some very valuable ways to think about what they do, and we want to introduce you to his ideas.

I hope you'll join us in expanding our vocabulary to include lots of lively words to describe our congregation.