

Plymouth Church recently embarked upon collective conversations and discernment on three key topics:

-Belief & Identity

-Mission

-Use of Plymouth Endowment

Conversations took place at both Horizon House and Plymouth Church. Here are summaries of comments shared during these informative, thoughtful gatherings...

Belief and Identity

May/2015

Horizon House Responses

The word Christian is vitally important to our identity.

It is strange that Christian is not stated in the UCC Identity statement; it matters!

Is being a Christian now any different now than in other times and places?

Yes, our body of knowledge is greater now than 300 years ago.

Using the term "Christian" comes with deep responsibility.

Christian is extremely important – the example of Christ is what we follow.

Is the lack of the word Christian in UCC statement intentional? To avoid confusion about what kind of Christian?

Followers of Christ, Golden Rule, example of being inclusive.

What about our Congregational identity?

Growing people of "faith" – Faith in what? Whom? Is faith the same as belief?

We struggle with faith.

Faith is more about hope – hope that God hasn't neglected us.

Faith is belief in love.

Faith is trust that the journey is worthwhile.

Faith includes passion and being called.

Belief sounds more intellectual than faith. Belief is based more on evidence.

Belief = Beloving? per Marcus Borg. Belief is relational.

Christ vs. Jesus?

Better to say "Jesus as the anointed one" or "Jesus as the Christ." There is no "Christ" without Jesus.

Triune God, resurrected Christ, Lord and Savior – those words don't resonate.

Prefer "transformed Jesus." Other language reflects ancient times before scientific discovery.

Are we created to belong to a community of faith?

Progressive Christianity

Does scripture still speak today?

Language is ancient, times are different; we need new language. New language may not be “Christian” language. What about non-Christian scripture? What is scripture? Interpretations and translations, etc. Scripture can only speak when you are engaged with it.

Church – what is it?

Church is not confined to location. It is the people. It does exist even when not gathered. Support one another.

If Jesus points to a universal “way” is there anything unique about Christianity?

Are other faiths also working and reworking their identities?

In the name United Church of Christ, Christian is implicit.

Progressive identity of Plymouth is important.

Plymouth Responses

“Christian” is very important, not negotiable.

If Christian were not in neon lights I wouldn’t be here.

Need to add “progressive” and reclaim Christian as progressive.

Reclaim the justice of Christ. Critical and vital.

Church is a hospital to the wounded rather than a courtroom.

Jesus is historical, human, rabbi, teacher, carpenter, healer.

Christ is divine, resurrected, the anointed one, the transformative part of Jesus.

Need room for both. We try to nurture “Christ-like” qualities.

Is the term “Christ” exclusivist? It carries a bigger burden of responsibility.

Resonate more with life of Jesus than “resurrected.”

Progressive Christianity is less exclusive than other forms.

What is important about Christianity?

Jesus is a doorway to what is universal, and makes God attainable. Jesus is the “way” to a universal truth. The incarnation.

Emphasis on love! Emphasis on re-birth.

I don’t need to have Christianity be unique!

Less emphasis on Creed and more on Covenant language.

Less on belief and more on practice.

We have our traditions and scriptures, and not a monopoly on God.

Rather than focusing on “transcending,” Jesus is in the world and in life.

Focused on love, acceptance, community and radical compassion.

We want to be serving and engaged in this way of life.

A way of life that leads to life.