

*Why?**“Why Campbell UMC?”*[Acts. 2:42-47](#)

This is the last of our three-week sermon series of “Why?” questions. The questions we sought to answer the past two Sundays were “Why do people need Christ?” and “Why do people need the Church?” Today, we come to our final question: “Why do people need *our* church?” In other words, *what is so great about Campbell United Methodist Church that makes us stand out among all the churches in our area? What do we offer to those who are looking for a church? If we disappeared tomorrow, what would our neighbors miss about us?*”

When I was introduced to the Staff-Parish Relations Committee last April, members of the committee told me 10 great things about our church:

1. Campbell has a long history and will celebrate its 129th anniversary;
2. Campbell is a reconciling congregation and welcomes LGBTQ persons without condition;
3. Campbell is proud of its ethnic diversity;
4. Campbell is rich in music with many musically gifted people. There are two vocal choirs and 4 bell choirs. And, our organ is one of the best in the Bay area, and our children’s musical is fantastic;
5. Campbell has an excellent preschool, Bright Days;
6. Campbell is home to New Creation, a new church start for second generation Koreans, as well as a thriving Hispanic outreach;
7. Campbell serves as a community center for many different groups;
8. Campbell is a free food distribution center for our neighbors in need;
9. Campbell is serious about environmental issues and is in the process of acquiring Solar Panels;
10. Campbell has devoted staff, leaders, and volunteers, and they are always willing to help and serve.

Over the last three months, I have found these things that the members of the SPRC told me about our church to be true. Indeed, Campbell United Methodist Church is a diverse and vibrant congregation with a long, storied history. With our many gifted and dedicated members, we are serving and reaching out to others, seeking to be and do better in all that we are involved in. This is why people need our church, and I am blessed to be pastor of this great church!

As I wrote in the Midweek Message last week, I have had a number of different opportunities to meet our members, both individually and in groups. Through the stories people shared at those gatherings, I’ve gotten to know our church family a little better and have learned more about our church.

First, I’ve learned that the diversity in our church is not as simple as it appears to be. Among our brothers and sisters of the African Fellowship, there are people from Sierra Leone and Liberia. Out of the several different ethnic groups in Sierra Leone, Temne and Mende, two of the major ones are represented by our church family.

Second, our church family is diverse not only in ethnicity, but also in geography. Though many of us were born and raised in California, I have discovered that quite a number of us came from other parts of the country. And, many of us, including me, Pastor Daniel, and Bruce, the chairperson of our church council, were born in other parts of the world. And except for those who were born into our church, and me, who

was fortunate enough to be sent here by our Bishop, the rest of us somehow found our way to Campbell UMC and made a decision to make this church our home.

How did you come to Campbell, and what made you stay? I asked this question to people I've met and here is what I have heard: When it came to why you were attracted to Campbell in the first place, the reasons were quite varied. You mentioned the excellent music programs, strong children and youth ministries, various class and small group offerings, mission and service opportunities, convenient location, inclusiveness, friendliness, family ties, friend's invitation, and different pastors.

However, when it came to why you decided to make Campbell your church home, almost everyone said the same thing: You decided to stay because of the people in the church. Soon, the church became not just a place where activities were held, but a home where family gathered.

Here is a sampling of what people have shared with me about their church experiences:

- "Church has been our family. We do everything together."
- "Our children missed the presence of their grandparents because they, our families of origin lived far away. But, older members of our church adopted our children. They got new grandparents in this church family!"
- "We've had lots of difficulties in our life, but my church family took care of us."
- "There is trust in the relationships that we have with each other here."
- "Our church is not judgmental but always accepting and welcoming. People are loving and caring."

Yes, Campbell United Methodist Church is a welcoming and accepting, loving and caring congregation! This is why people need us! People need to come to the Campbell United Methodist Church to worship, to have fellowship, and to grow in their faith! What a blessing it is to be one of the pastors of this church family!

Like the first Christian faith community we heard about in today's scripture, we bring to our fellowship many differences in our personal background, experiences, expectations, and personalities. Yet, we are united by our faith in Jesus Christ, as believers comprising one body. This unity is strengthened by the relationships that are fostered as we keep coming together. Whether it is worship, discipleship, fellowship, or mission, and service, what matters is that we engage in these activities together, as a family. The book of Acts describes this kind of family this way: when they were together, all things were in common (Acts 2:44). As Jesus told his disciples, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matt. 18:20). It is when we are gathered as a community, in relationship with each other, that we are blessed with God's presence.

But, in this concept of a church family, there is danger. Calling ourselves as family sounds wonderful, yet, family can be very exclusive. When you know each other very well, when you have great relationships with one another, the relationships that you have developed for many years, you just love each other so much, so you forget to look around and see who is new in our midst. What's what I witnessed when I visited one of the churches in our area before I started here.

It was a lovely church, and their sanctuary was packed with happy worshipers. The service was great with great hymn singing and preaching, and after the worship service, they had a great fellowship time, too. Everything was perfect except one thing: no one talked to me. I am sure they knew that I was a stranger be-

cause they seemed to know each other very well. But, still no one, even none of those who were sitting on my right and left said hi to me.

So, I made a decision to introduce myself to them. I said, "Hello, my name is Ouk-Yean Kim Jueng. I am the new pastor of Campbell UMC." And, then, they said these things in return, "Oh, wonderful. You are the new pastor of Campbell! Welcome to our area!" "Oh I know someone in your church. Do you know rev. Dick Corson?" They opened up to me so well. But, you know, their welcome of me did not happen until I introduced myself to them. It happened in the sanctuary and in the fellowship hall. Because I introduced myself to them, I ended up meeting and talking to several people, staying there for more than a half an hour after the worship service! They were really wonderful people, but it took courage on my part to find it out.

And, then, I came to Campbell. On my first Sunday, everyone was so welcoming! Of course, everyone knew I was their new pastor. Everyone knew my name and even how to pronounce it correctly! I was very impressed. What an amazing church experience that I had as a new comer!

But, I wondered if others would have the same kind of experience that I had when they come to worship with us for the first time. We are like a family. We are so loving to one another. But, the great relationships we have among ourselves can make us not think about, not see other people, in our midst. That's what I witnessed at the church I visited. So, I was very pleased to hear from some of our visitors about their positive experience with us and I encourage you to continue to be welcoming to our visitors.

I now invite you to look around. Turn to the right and the left and see who is sitting there. I often hear people saying, "I am reluctant to say hi to others because I don't know if they are already our church members or new people." No problem! Just say this: "Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. Have I met you before?" Then, you will find out who the person is, if he/she is a member or new. And also, if you find out the person is a visitor, what do you do? Help him/her feel welcomed in our midst. After the worship service, take them to the Fellowship Hall and offer them drink and refreshments. Help them feel like they are already part of our church family on their first Sunday with us.

Wouldn't it be great if it happened every single Sunday? Actually, it was what happened to the first Christian community in the first century. They gathered together. They shared everything in common, welcoming each other, meeting the needs of one another. When they did it, the scripture says, the Lord added a great number to their fellowship day by day. They did not even go out to get more people!

As Daelene said during the children's time, we are a family, and we celebrate it. But, remember this great family is not just for us but for all God's people, both existing and new members. Whenever we get together for worship, fellowship, discipleship, mission and service, let us celebrate together as family, extending our welcome to everyone who walks into this building! Amen.