

To: Pastors and Churches in the Wisconsin Conference

Dear friends and partners in the ministry of the Gospel. Grace, mercy, and peace be with you.

In a time of conflict and danger for his community, the prophet Isaiah offered an invitation from God to the people: "Come, let us reason together." (Isaiah 1:18)

These are words to take to heart in Wisconsin these days, as divisions in our common life are causing confusion and pain. We are all aware of the difficult economic circumstances facing our state. Many of our families and many United Church of Christ congregations find they have to make difficult choices. Our leaders face hard decisions about balancing a budget while continuing to provide essential services and preserve jobs that support families and build a healthy society.

We all know that sacrifices will have to be made. The question is how decisions will be made and if those who will be faced with the greater burden of these sacrifices will be given the respect that offers them a place at the table as decisions are made.

"Come, let us reason together" is not a strategy that avoids decisions but is an essential framework of a democratic society and is consistent with the moral and ethical principles that come out of our Christian faith. The right to negotiate is at the core of Wisconsin's history, and tough economic times are not a moment to turn away from these essential rights that provide for fair and just decision making.

When all come to the table and reason in good faith, better decisions are made. When people who are affected help make decisions, they have a greater stake in the outcome and provide a voice of support for decisions, even ones that may not be in their immediate self-interest. Basic human dignity is preserved.

As members of our congregations, let us remember that it is our neighbors and fellow church members and friends, and often our own families that are affected by the current attempt to remove essential rights and alter a long history of work for justice.

Let us remember with gratitude those who teach our children and who enforce the law and provide for safety and important services on our streets and in the many places where loyal public employees work to make our state a beautiful and wonderful place to live.

Let us uphold our leaders while also asking them to hold to the highest standards of our history and traditions that promote justice and insure respect for all persons. May we let them know that we offer our greatest hope and strength to them, knowing the extraordinary tasks that are before them.

May we all lift special prayers this Sunday for our state and for all who are involved in this important moment in our public life. Our prayers go out to families wondering about their future, to state workers, legislators, our governor, union leaders, and all of us as citizens. Let us pray that our churches may be a source of healing and may offer hope grounded in a God of justice and compassion who gifts us with the reason that can provide a just, fair, and respectful way through our common problems.

The Apostle Paul reminds us of the strong bonds that attend to human community and the call to each and all to seek not narrow self-advantage but the wider benefits of a just society. He calls the church, and through the church the society, to recognize that the Creator provides to each of us "varieties of gifts...and varieties of service...but it is the same God who activates them in everyone (and gives) to each the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

In faith, may we be advocates for that common good in the community of God's people that is Wisconsin.

Faithfully,

David Moyer  
Conference Minister