

Valuing Virtues in a VUCA World

From now on, brothers and sisters, if anything is excellent and if anything is admirable, focus your thoughts on these things: all that is true, all that is holy, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is lovely, and all that is worthy of praise. (Philippians 4:8, CEB)

Yesterday, Susan Vernon and I attended the Clergy Session of the East Ohio Annual Conference at Mount Union University. Susan serves as a lay member of the conference's Board of Ministry (formerly Board of Ordained Ministry). She also serves on the Canal District Committee on Ministry. At the request of Bishop Tracy Smith Malone, this was the first time that we have held this Clergy Session separately from our extended annual gathering at Lakeside. It certainly allowed for a more relaxed pace and time for clergy to interact with one another during lunch and other breaks.

During the full day of worship, business, fellowship, and training, we heard from Professor Alan Kolp of Baldwin Wallace University. He shared a number of thoughts which, to my ears, sounded very similar to those I've been sharing with you from Tod Bolsinger's book, "Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory." It reinforced the idea that we are living in a rapidly changing world, which presents both obstacles and opportunities to organizations like churches.

One concept that Dr. Kolp highlighted was something called VUCA, which stands for: Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous. VUCA is used by our military to describe the uncertainty of our world and the stress soldiers face in unfamiliar circumstances. At first glance, a VUCA world sounds very threatening. In a VUCA world, much of what we have learned to be successful in a 'normal' world, no longer seems to work. We have the feeling that we need to re-tool for new ways of leading and living.

So, in the midst of a VUCA world, what should we hold on to? Is anything we already know going to be useful? Actually, yes! He suggested that we hold onto Virtues such as Trust, Love, Courage, Justice, Wisdom, Temperance, and Hope. These are things which can never go away. They are like our Core Values, which should never change.

Friends, here's the great news! As people who believe in a Savior named Jesus, these Virtues are already part of who we are. What an amazing opportunity we have to let these qualities shine in order to be a blessing to others. As Paul says in his letter to the Philippians, we focus on these virtuous things - things that are true, holy, just, pure, lovely, and worthy of praise. Allow the Holy Spirit to develop these character qualities in you. They will never go out of style!

Wishing You Pentecost Power,

Pastor David Rittgers