

**Pleasant View UMC, Abingdon, VA**  
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**FROM MY PERSPECTIVE**

*By Rev. Dale Gilert*

Today, we come to a place where we remember that the Body of Christ was broken for us and the blood of Christ was shed for us. The sacrifice Jesus made showed us the depth of God's love, and the length he was willing to go to demonstrate that love for us.

The United Methodist Church, our expression of the Body of Christ, has been broken. This was demonstrated for all to see this past week. While parts of the Church argued passionately for one side, the other side was just as passionate. We left St. Louis with a decision, but I'm thinking that the fight is not yet over. And like everybody else, I'm tired of the brokenness.

The United Methodist Church is unique. We're the only Protestant group in this country that has at least one church in every county. That one fact tells us that our Church is as diverse as our nation. It also tells us that we're going to reflect attitudes and sentiments that are shaped by who we live with, work with, worship with, and do politics with. Add this to our uniqueness: we are a global Church. General Conference is conducted in four different official languages. And our diversity is reflected in the backgrounds and biases we bring with us to our expression of the Church.

I applaud those who represented the United Methodist Church in St. Louis. They didn't have to do it. But, they chose to believe that the Church, marred as it is by human frailty, is worth fighting for. And they fought with passion and enthusiasm, and they fought with hearts and consciences that love the Church. I know this about people who disagree with me on the big issue: they love the Lord and they love the Church.

I had that difficult discussion recently with a clergy brother in Christ. We're about the same age. We survived raising children and now we celebrate grandchildren. His views and mine were very different. He believes he's right, and I believe I'm right. And yet our respect deepened for one another because we did the difficult thing: we listened to each other.

Some of us hurt today, because the Body is broken. Some of us let out a big sigh of relief because the fight is over, at least for now.

Today, we are the Body of Christ. We have wonderful ministries that demand our resources and our energies. We love without condition and welcome anyone to join us at Christ's table. We have an enemy, but it's really not "those people." Jesus reminds us that we're battling the gates of hell. Let's not ever forget who is the real enemy.

Welcome to worship. What we do here matters.