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HEALTHY CHURCH DEMANDS HEALTHY RESPECT FOR MEMBERS' OPINIONS **(Published March 30, 2005, in Trinity Times newsletter) - 2/24/2005**

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A famous tenor, not known for his modesty, dies and goes to Heaven. He immediately demands a musical job. After checking with Higher Authority, St. Peter says the singer may train a new Heavenly Choir. The tenor tells St. Peter he needs 10,000 sopranos, 10,000 altos and 10,000 basses and baritones.

St. Peter asks, "But won't you also need 10,000 tenors?" Glaring, the famous singer responds, "I'll sing tenor!"

A healthy church is something of a choir as well, with multiple voices blending to create something better than the notes of its individuals. We need to remember that it is healthy for individual members to hold varying views on particularly divisive social issues.

Likewise, we tread dangerously when we allow ideological groups to push specific agendas on our church premises. That's why Trinity's bylaws do not allow the presentation of propaganda that supports only one viewpoint in regard to divisive social issues. Materials that are truly "educational" tend to present more than one point of view, while those that present only one side in a controversy are called "spin." Having generated spin on behalf of various clients for years, it has its place -- but that place is not in church.

With prayer and the Bible as their guide, church members must be allowed to develop their own beliefs about controversial social issues, and they may come to different conclusions. The church should continue to respect this healthy process as it has in the past.

Moreover, if Trinity is ever to grow beyond its current membership, we must be willing to open our doors to those who may not agree with the positions of certain vocal minorities regarding the divisive social issues of our day. Trinity will only transcend its current membership boundaries if it makes a principled stand in support of diversity of opinion and honest debate. It is not the role of the church to squelch the deeply held beliefs of members who do not wish to overturn thousands of years of church tradition in order to champion a posture that fits the latest social fashion.

Just like a choir, God's truth rings out clearest when all voices are heard. Our church must maintain an environment that supports those who lovingly disagree. Otherwise, Trinity will not attract future members or retain the members it currently holds dear.

Yours in Christ,

Jim Muench
