

**WCC Board and Committee Monthly Devotional**  
**January, 2017**

**Theme for the Month:**

- ❖ To boldly challenge our own complacency through courageous conversation.

**Scripture Passage:**

- ❖ "Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." <sup>2</sup> And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. <sup>6</sup>The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. <sup>7</sup>After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. <sup>8</sup>And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; <sup>9</sup>and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. <sup>10</sup>Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? <sup>11</sup> On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

Acts 15, Verses 1-2, 6-11 (NRSV)

**Scriptural Context:**

- ❖ This passage from the Book of Acts is about an issue on which the earliest Christians disagreed passionately. Since Abraham in Genesis, circumcision had been the sign of Israel's covenant with God. Throughout the Old Testament, Israelites circumcised their boys on the 8th day, and male converts to Judaism were required to be circumcised. It was non-negotiable. The earliest Christians in Jerusalem and surroundings, all Jewish-Christian, continued this custom. But when Paul and others began to take the message beyond Jewish circles to Gentile audiences, something strange happened: as they converted, they showed signs that God's Spirit had come into them even before Paul and his helpers could get them circumcised. So, the leaders came together to decide what to do.
- ❖ Conflict about issues is clearly not just a 21<sup>st</sup> century phenomena. Is it possible that technological advances in communication have left us unable to confront people properly? To engage in civil discourse? People can criticize others on Facebook and Twitter instead of talking face to face. What can we as Christians do to reverse this trend?

**Discussion Questions:**

- ❖ How can you stay tethered to God for gentleness and guidance when having a courageous conversation?
- ❖ What should our Board or Committee do to encourage all church members to gain wisdom from a broader perspective? (It was Aristotle who said "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.")

**Meeting Prayer:**

- ❖ Faithful and loving God, grant me the wisdom to see conflict from a bigger perspective, and to gain the understanding that will build trust. And by so doing, grant me the knowledge of Your will to resolve any issue. In Jesus name, Amen

Prepared by the Board of Deacons