

## Two Ends Against the Middle

I had prepared a PowerPoint presentation in 2019 for a civic club in Virginia Beach, Virginia, who asked me to speak on how to talk about difficult subjects and still remain friends. One slide from the presentation is below, and it is how I want to want to begin to address violent confrontations of different ideological perspectives like the BLM demonstrations in past months and the demonstration at the Capitol last Wednesday as your pastor.

A quick summary of this slide is that it all comes down to whether or not we can accept **change**, and how much you let **fear** drive your words (rhetoric) and actions (behavior). Progressives (my preference to derogatory label of “Liberals” and certainly that of “Socialists”) are more prone to accept change, whereas Traditionalists (a more benign description than “Conservatives” and certainly that of “Fascists”) are less likely to accept change. The intensity of those sentiments increases as you get further from the mean. Likewise, a sense of fear increases the further away from the mean to the point where the 2.5% on each end (“extremists”) live in a perpetual fear or paranoia which they cover-up with false bravado so that no one really sees their fear. Repressed fear nevertheless comes out in the form of anger when it exceeds one’s control, as when someone or something takes a cap off a “bottle” (you or me, figuratively) and the pressure is then released. That is what you see in the destruction of property and violence against people during riots.

Whatever the issue that led to the riot, only 16% of the population are on each end of the spectrum (statistically, over one standard deviation from the mean). That means those positions are clearly not the majority of a population. Most of our society, around 68%, are Centrists (Moderates could be another description). Without a doubt some Centrists lean toward one end or the other of the spectrum when it comes to their views on political and social issues, but they are not so entrenched in their fear of change that they refuse to listen to other perspectives. They are also less apt to resort to harsh rhetoric and physical violence. Centrists unfortunately get caught in the crossfire between Progressives and Traditionalists, and so are viewed as enemies by both sides. That is what two ends against the middle looks like, and when it is carried on for too long and/or to a greater degree of severity, it leads to a social implosion. This has happened over and over again in human history, and it can happen to us.

This analytical tool is dependent on a large number of participants, and it should be inclusive of all demographic groups (rich and poor, multiple ethnicities, both genders, the entire adult age range, etc.). The curve is skewed and unreliable if the sample numbers are too small and/or they only include a particular demographic group. As an example, it could explain sentiments of United Methodists in the U.S. on gender and sexual inclusion (a back-burner issue we still have face), but if the same survey was given to our congregation, it would not be accurate. That said, I still think it is an informative tool if you stop and think about where you fall in the spectrum when it comes to your acceptance of change and your level of fear.

Maybe you’re asking yourself, “Okay, pastor, that’s all good and fine, but what does all this have to do with my faith in Jesus Christ?” Here’s the short answer. **Jesus is the mean, and our Lord and Savior does not take sides.** To the Traditionalist who holds fast to the status quo, Jesus seems too progressive, and to the Progressive who wants to throw the past out the window, he appears to be too traditional. Jesus’ ethos and morality comes from a Centrist position—one that accepts God’s spiritual kingdom which changes stoic and static religiosity and calls for individuals on both downslopes of the curve to turn from sin and idolatry and become a part of the KINdom, the family, of God. That family includes many races, nationalities, ethnicities, genders, ages, incomes, and partisans. True disciples of Jesus Christ are peacemakers.

<sup>9</sup> ***“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God*** (Matthew 5:9, NRSV).

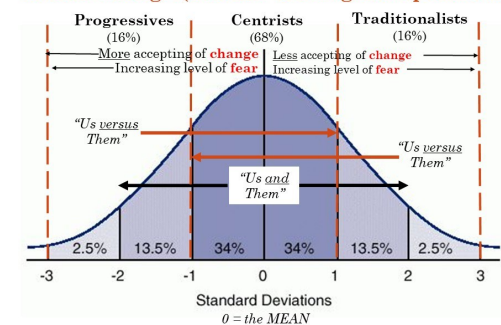
With the strength God gives them, they bring Progressives and Traditionalists together through emotional intelligence and psychological flexibility while, at the same time, seek God’s guidance on any given issue in order to find God’s truth. They do not take sides, increase the social divide, and further the social implosion. That is how the KINdom of God is increased, how our congregation will reflect that KINdom on earth as it is in heaven, and how the Body of Christ will resist the temptations of Satan when he puts on the clothes of false Christianity.

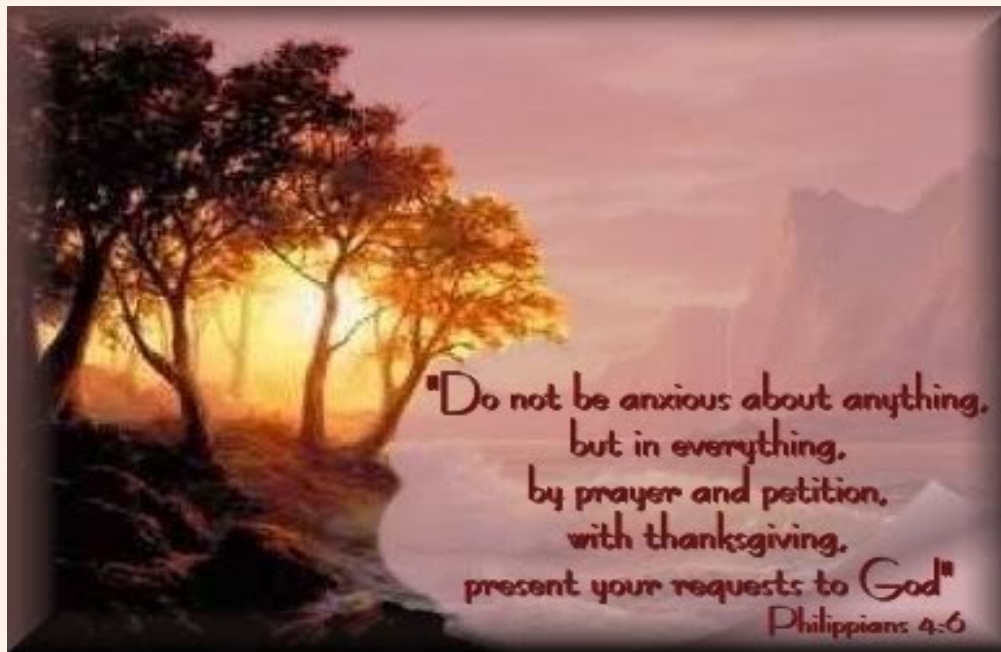
<sup>12</sup> ***For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free [Traditionalist or Progressive]—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. <sup>14</sup> Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many*** (I Corinthians 12: 12-14, NRSV, adapted).

Yours in Christ our Lord,

*Pastor Tom*

Normal Distribution (Bell) Curve & Acceptance of Social Change (aka the Ideological Spectrum)





Come join us for in person worship services at 8:00 & 10:00. We are following all Covid guidelines to insure your health and well being. If you would rather stay home you can watch our service at 10:00 am on facebook/llcumc

**On Going:** Les Case, Wade Davis, Roger Grable, Richard Fuerst, Winnie Fuerst, Harvey Geary, Michael Hatfield, Linda Koleiny, Shane Miley, Kirk Morehead, Nancy Rowe, all the families who have lost loved ones or are sick from the Covid Virus

**Depression and Mental Health:** Robby Sherrod

**Strength and Healing:** Graves family, Kaleb Lamb, Mike McMillin, DJ Petty, Dennis Rogers, Helena VonRosenberg, Andrew White

**Missions:** Kenyan G-Marc Project, Chics for Chicks, Hillcrest Transitional Housing, Harvester's Food Bank, Lazarus Ministries, Tarsney Lake Families, Congregation de Mellier, Heart and Soul Children's Learning Center

**Please contact the office to update or add prayer requests**



As we improve our ability to live stream our worship services with better equipment within the next month, we will need one other person in the back (in addition to the team that monitors our worship slides) to operate the high definition camera that is mounted on the wall and the additional laptop computer that will be hooked to it for our 10:00 Sunday morning service. It sounds daunting, I know, but there will be a tutorial and a written guide on this vital part of our virtual ministry as we continue to live stream the service to those who cannot attend and those who may be "checking us out." **If you or someone you know can help us, please let Pastor Tom know (831-333-6893 or [pastorllcumc@gmail.com](mailto:pastorllcumc@gmail.com)).**

Thank you to all who have been praying for me during this rather intensive journey. I have encountered with abdominal cancer (If you are interested in more details concerning the type of cancer and Kirk's journey, go to [www.caringbridge.org](http://www.caringbridge.org) and type in Kirk Morehead and it will take you a Kirk's web page that has more information). It has been a difficult at times and I could not have made it without the prayers, love and support of our church family. You have truly been an inspiration during the difficult times and a blessing now that I am feeling better.

We are praying for a full recovery after Chemo, which I will be doing for the next 6 months.

I know most all of us have dealt with cancer somewhere in our family or with friends and my experience has taught me that you do not get through this alone, you must have support everywhere you can find it and God provides the strength for healing. I am so thankful for the exceptional support that has been given to me from some of my friends who provided Gods positive energy through my mind, body and soul when I was at my most vulnerable state. Miracles do happen and God led us to the best medical team we could find which melted together with the people in my life who love and support me. None of my recovering could of happened without the love and support of my family. Cindy has been my caretaker and advocate from the beginning of this journey, she is unbelievable and relentless. We have the full support of my two son's and their wife's (Zach/Michelle and Nick/Zoe) who have been with us every step of the way. None of us want to deal with illness especially cancer, however I believe the best answer for a positive outcome is support you get from those who care about you.

Many of you also know that Cindy and I do a lot of work in Kenya, Africa with people we know and who have become a part of our family as we developed these relationships while living in Kenya. LLCUMC has chosen to include some of our work as part of the church missions. We are very happy to share that through the churches efforts we have been able to provide a security wall for the shelter and safe house for defiled girls and boys. This place is one of the first of its kind in Kenya and the two Kenyan ladies (Maggie and Grace) developed and presented this idea to Cindy and I last year. They are both amazing ladies who just want to do God's work that they feel has been their calling for many years. They asked if we could help this dream to come true and of course we said we would do all we could to help. We are hoping we are open for the children in just a few months. Gods work and his will make all the difference in many of these young peoples lives. This is what we can do when we join together to spread gods will and love across the world.

Thank You

God Bless

Kirk

# January 2021

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>27</b>	28	29	30	31	1 Happy New Year!	2
<b>3 Services</b> <b>8:00 &amp; 10:00 am</b>	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>10 Services</b> <b>8:00 &amp; 10:00 am</b>	11	12	13	14	15	16
<b>17 Services</b> <b>8:00 &amp; 10:00 am</b>	18	19 Missions Meeting 7:00	20	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	23
<b>24 Services</b> <b>8:00 &amp; 10:00 am</b>	25	26 Church Council Meeting 7:00	27	28	29	30
<b>31 Services</b> <b>8:00 &amp; 10:00 am</b>						