

Here are some thoughts on the issues that are underlined below:

- I wish we did not insist on using words and phrases that tend to be current organization buzzwords. Such words, I think, discourage people from joining the discussion.
  - "prophetic"... true, a secondary meaning of the word ( according to the new Oxford dictionary) involves speaking out on an issue; but I had to look it up to find the connection. (OK Ok, I guess it is not the end of the world to learn a new use of a word, and maybe I take semantics too seriously!).
  - "sacred conversation"...why not just a thoughtful discussion, or must we use "sacred" to separate us from the ungodly ones??
  - "nurturing"...it feels a bit condescending used this way...and certainly should not exclude expressions of honest differences in opinions.
  - "discernment" ... enough said.
- First, I think we should take stands as individuals. Discussions, certainly including those within the Church family, help us come to conclusions, and help us to gain perspectives on issues. Since I value a religious perspective on all issues, I think we should have and continue to have discussions in post-service sessions. This includes "town meetings" and meetings with invited speakers, some of whom would have radical or "minority" opinions.
- I think it entirely proper for sermons to address current issues from a broad "Jesus perspective". But, viewing Sunday service and "church" in general to be a refuge from the burdens of the world, I don't want me or others with different opinions to get beat over the head with issues. And I think we do OK with the balance and sincerity of the sermons and service-focus that we now have. What bothers me far more is the confusion which is always ( and maybe inevitably) caused by the constant mixing of literal-factual and historical-metaphorical interpretations of the bible. ( yeah, I am probably slipping into conflict with the first point I made above!)
- Should Niles CC take a public stand on moral or human rights issues issues? I say definitely yes. We need to choose carefully the issues that we take on. Are they really "moral" issues , or are they political-Democrat-Republican issues? Is prop 8 a lifestyle or political issue or a civil rights issue? ( civil rights, I say) Is "illegal" immigration a political or economic or human rights issue ( all 3, I say). Whatever issue we as a Church take on publicly should be above politics and personal opinions. We as individuals can handle politics and personal opinions, and we should take advantage of having a caring Niles CC family in which and to which to express those thoughts. But I think a religious organization such as ours has the right and the obligation to speak out publicly on issues of justice for and dignity of all people.
- If Niles CC as an organization decides to advocate some issue ( by a news article or a from-the-pulpit statement or statement in our bulletin or sponsoring a rally, etc.) I believe we must have a consensus ( to be defined) rather than just a majority opinion. Taking a stand on an issue with a 52 to 48% opinion split would not be productive. We see that is hard enough on a national level. But I would think that a a 75% majority should be

sufficient. If I were in the 25% minority I could live with the goodwill of the majority on some issue. Of course if I were always in the 25% minority I would likely look elsewhere; but I suspect most of us would be in both minority and majority groups over a period of time. In fact, it would be a bit stifling to be in the majority all the time. And if a 75% majority could not be reached, there is no reason that a group of NCC individuals could not form an interest group and advocate an opinion ( as a group of individuals) in any way desired. In that case Niles CC would just be a springboard to launch that group.

- Who would vote on such issues? Certainly, all members. But we have a bunch of non-official members ( do we call them friends, associates or something , which as a Deacon I should but don't know offhand?) that I think ought to be included. We could add into our bylaws or policies a paragraph that would allow that to happen for votes on public issues.