



Pastor Enno's Weekly Message

Dear Friends,

In the Herald-News last week under editorials, a man wrote that allowing children and young people to explore their gender identity can cause most people to be uncomfortable and that the 99% of 'normal' (my characterization) people shouldn't have to be surprised or uncomfortable because of it. The right of the majority. This past week, news came out in Oklahoma that a young student, named Nex, was bullied and beaten by their classmates because they identify as non-binary. The parents were called to bring Nex home and were told they (the youth) was suspended because of an altercation in the bathroom with three girls. Even though Nex was bleeding and bruised, no police were called or medical care offered. The parents took Nex to the emergency room, where Nex was treated and released. The next day they collapsed, and an ambulance was called. Nex was pronounced dead at the scene.

No where in our constitution are we protected from being uncomfortable or surprised. No where in our Christian faith or the Bible are we protected from being uncomfortable or surprised. "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" was Thomas Jefferson's call to America. Nex was pursuing their life, liberty, and happiness by exploring and being who God created them to be. Their classmates took away their rights in a brutal and deadly way.

In our faith and practice, we are to treat everyone with love and respect. We are also called to be creating justice for the least of these and those who are downtrodden. Through Biblical study, science, and our advances in knowledge about humans and the world, our church affirms that every person is a child of God. Our church affirms that there is beauty and wonder and greatness in the diversity of who we are and how we can express ourselves. Our faith calls us to love and do good, not bully or do violence. As an Open and Affirming church, we stand up for all people, especially our youth in this community who are outside of our society's, or a certain faith's, ideological framework.

Our Cook County Pride is organizing a vigil to honor and remember Nex Benedict. We will get out information out as soon as we can. We have cards in our narthex that you can fill out that will be given to the LGBTQ+ young people. Please fill one or ten out. They need our love, acceptance, and affirmation.

Peace