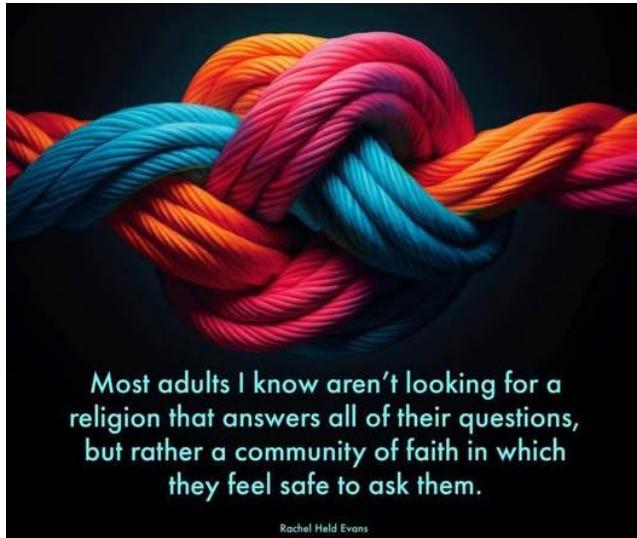


Greetings St. Paul Lutheran Church!

I saw this on Facebook and wondered how true it is.



If it is true, I hope St. Paul feels like a safe place to ask questions once people get through the doors or at least watch on Facebook. But what about those people who don't think *any* church is a safe place so they don't even look to us? How do we get them the message that St. Paul is a safe place? I'm not really sure the answer except looking for opportunities that we can tell our story. As I said the other week, evangelism sometimes is changing people's assumption about God and God's people.

I like this quote because it uses the term "community of faith". That language change by itself can be more welcoming to some than "church." Church is comforting to many of us inside of it, but to those outside it can be intimidating if not anxiety producing.

As people of faith, we do need to recognize that "the church" has hurt people. More often than not it was not intentional yet people were hurt. We, individually, ourselves, may not even have done the hurting, but as church people we can be looked at as the culprit. It may not be fair but for the sake of the hurting people, we can say we are sorry that the church hurt you (whatever church, denomination or church person it was).

We can say and then show we are not like what they have experienced. But we first have to acknowledge their experience. In the Confession and Forgiveness, we say on Sundays, I begin with, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Admitting that the body of Christ has hurt people, is confessing our sin. Otherwise we deceive ourselves and can't be open to hearing the story of those want a place to ask questions.

For those of us who have been in the church our whole lives, this can be hard. We sometimes want to say the church always gets it right because Jesus is always right. Well, the church is a human institution albeit Holy Spirit-led but humans can get these wrong and we can't equate church with Jesus. It is supposed to be the best representation of the Kingdom of God on earth but it will fail just as individuals do. That's when we ask for forgiveness and try to do better.

Take care and God bless

-PrAshley

