

**A Sermon for the 12th Sunday after Pentecost
August 31, 2025**



Come to New Life!

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[Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost – The Episcopal Church](#)

Luke 14:1, 7-14

Discord and reconciliation

With all good intentions in any community, conflict may arise. Jesus comments on divisions that may happen when some people attempt to elevate themselves above others, for instance at a banquet, about the seating chart. Do you go for the best seat, say, next to the host, to bask in everyone's admiration? There's a chance the host may ask you to move on down the line, and that would be very embarrassing. Jesus recommends humility, that you sit in the lowly seat, and if the host wants you to move up, you will be so invited.

In our church communities, we try to be loving and inclusive in all that we do. Our Episcopal polity is famously based on the metaphor of a three-legged stool, of scripture, tradition and reason. For over 250 years our church has thrived in this country through listening to each other and making our way through various cultural differences. We haven't always been humble but we have learned to welcome all people and all opinions. I tell you every Sunday, All are welcome at the Lord's table.

You chose to combine parishes and gladly accepted each other, from St. Michael's and St. Peter's, over 20 years ago, coming together just before the Episcopal Church was rent through with major disagreements that resulted in fracture and schism. When I was in Pennsylvania from 2000 to 2005, the major fights were about gay clergy but also encompassed differing interpretations of scripture and theology. In Pennsylvania, we saw more than one parish leave the Episcopal Church, led by unhappy clergy.

When I came to this diocese in 2006, similar troubles were playing out. The major complaints, besides the gay issue, involved old grievances about allowing women to be ordained and the new prayer book of 1979. Much was settled at the General Convention of 2006, which was held in Columbus, Ohio, when the newly elected Presiding Bishop was a woman. Several bishops, who opposed women clergy, left the church and joined various splinter groups. Over time, the splinters joined together and called themselves the Anglican Church in North America, ACNA.

And now, suddenly, in our own diocese, there is new disruption. The Episcopal parish of St. Matthew's in Toledo has left the Episcopal Church to become part of the ACNA, led by their rector. Last Sunday they convened at a different building and called themselves St. Matthew's Anglican Church. Our Bishop Anne Jolly went to see the remnant of St. Matthew's Episcopal. She reports that about 13 people showed up, and she offered them pastoral care and promises of support. Most of us hearing this news are saying, "What happened?" How can we help? I attended a Zoom meeting with the bishop and many clergy, and all of them expressed shock and surprise. There was no warning of this departure. I will answer any questions you may have as best I can, during the Episcopal Minute.

But this is a sermon, and sermons are supposed to be about Good News. The definition of Gospel is Good News.

Jesus told us to strive for peace and concord, and that humility is a good strategy.

At that Zoom meeting, I heard a lot of concern and desire for reconciliation. We must strive for understanding and awareness wherever we see disagreement and discord, inside our parishes and outside in the wider community. In any altercation, let us try to listen to other opinions. Let us never take action that will injure others.

The good news is that the love of Christ is wide enough for us all.

Next Sunday we will celebrate a Homecoming. We have invited people who left us before my tenure of seven years, and we have missed their presence among us.

We hope they will return, if only for this Sunday, and allow us to greet them in welcome.

We are all invited to the great banquet, and we celebrate that holy banquet each week with the Eucharist. HOW we celebrate is much less important than WHO we invite to the celebration. Jesus embraces us all, no matter what our opinions or practices. We are all so blessed to be loved by God. Jesus reminds us that as we are loved by God, let us also love all of God's children.