

Column

More business gets transacted at the post office than just mailing letters. On a recent visit, I ran into a community leader who stopped me to discuss hymns Christians have in common. This weighty discussion was interspersed with greetings and side conversations . . . isn't it grand to live in a small town!

In the end, however, we got down to the topic at hand. As it turned out, she needed hymns suitable for an inter-denominational service. The conversation ended with a request that I supply her with such a list, which I readily agreed to do.

After leaving the post office, I continued to reflect not only on hymns, but texts Christians have in common. There are indeed many, and it is not hard to think of examples.

In the realm of hymns, at least for those in the Protestant tradition, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" – often just called the Doxology -- would top the list. In many of our churches, it is sung every Sunday, often as tithes and offerings are brought forward and presented.

Other such hymns would surely include: "A mighty fortress is our God" (from the Lutheran tradition); "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty" (written by an Anglican bishop); and "Faith of our Fathers" (words of a Roman Catholic Cardinal).

In addition to hymns, there are a number of texts known and used across denominational lines. The Lord's Prayer is a chief example. When First Lady Melania Trump opened a recent meeting in Melbourne, Fla., with "Our Father, who art in heaven . . ." she did not have to cite the source of her words. All knew, and most, if invited, would have been able to join in.

Another such text would be the Apostles' Creed. This brief summary of the Christian faith is used by Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Anglican, Methodists, Lutherans and many others. Even in churches where it is not publicly recited, many members of these churches are familiar with its words and are in substantial agreement with the Bible doctrines it sets forth.

A final example would be certain well-known Bible passages, the 23rd Psalm, the Ten Commandments and John 3:16 being key examples. Many – again across church lines – not only know and treasure the words of these texts but can recite them from memory.

The power brokers of this world want to foster descent and division. Christ, on the other hand, desires His people to be one in hope and love. Common texts and hymns are a step in the right direction. This I learned from a visit to the post office.

O GOD, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace; Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord: that as there is but one Body and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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