

Hygge

Hygge became part of my vocabulary in January of 2017 when I heard an interview with Meik Wiking, CEO of the Happiness Research Institute and research associate for Denmark at the World Database of Happiness. The concept (and, frankly, being able to say the word and its derivatives) fascinated me. Hygge is attributed to the Danes who are repeatedly listed as the happiest people in the world. Hygge is about coziness and happiness: fireplaces, hot cocoa, board games, candlelight, afghans, lots of wood (decor), time with family and friends.

Perhaps hygge is particularly attractive or necessary in northern winters where darkness comes early and it's cold and icy outside. It struck me as something I've tried to practice in my own home through the years, never knowing it was a named behavior, and it validated my repeated playing of our crackling fireplace DVD that winter.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.

The final weeks of the season of Easter in year C, the lectionary gospel readings are from Jesus' "farewell discourse" in the gospel according to John. Near the end of chapter 14, Jesus says "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives."

This peace of which Jesus speaks, which Jesus bequeaths the disciples, is more than lack of conflict, comfort, and placid calm. It is bigger and better than hygge.

I once conducted a funeral for a family in which siblings had argued for several years over the best approach for their parent's care. At the time of their parent's death, they were barely speaking to each other. Each of them asked if I could say something in the funeral sermon to make the others understand some particular named viewpoint. At that funeral, there was no hygge and no peace, either. I've sometimes wondered if they've spoken since the funeral.

Not as the world gives

Peace is not usually achieved by ignoring our differences, which is how we sometimes try to approach it. I doubt that Jesus imagined that the disciples would suddenly agree on everything and live in constant unity of thought. I think he wanted them to be able to have difficult conversations because they loved him and would keep his words and would be taught by the Holy Spirit.

Today, too, in our congregations we should seek the peace with which Jesus has blessed us. It is deeper than surface pleasantness and the practice of hygge. Jesus' peace does not ignore or discount differences of opinion. It is a peace which encompasses being able to talk about everything because of our common faith, commitment, and covenants.

Truths and forms with respect to which [people] of good characters and principles may differ

One of the Historic Principles of Church Order in our Presbyterian *Book of Order* is that there are "truths and forms with respect to which [people] of good characters and principles may

differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.” (F-3.0105) Our Constitution is a tool to facilitate decision-making, among other things. It stipulates where responsibility and authority lies and provides for fair processes for making decisions. It is hoped that using such means we can live in peace without ignoring our differences.

As Jesus’ disciples, we are able to have healthy conversations even when we disagree. Jesus' peace doesn't promise us happy calm seas, a lifetime of kumbaya, or mere contentment. The Holy Spirit enables a peaceful holding of hard conversations. Speaking the truth in love, we seek to build up the body of Christ.

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