**Module 3: Controversial Topics and the Pulpit**

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

**Devotion**

We live in a politically charged time. Protests, riots, clenched fists, hurling of names and projectiles, and categorizing people as good or evil depending on whatever political party they belong to. There are indeed folks on either side of the aisle who hesitate to speak their minds. Many not only don’t want to see their own feelings hurt but they don’t want to hurt the feelings of others. Even better would be a culture where civility is at the forefront of social engagement, and where people could exercise democratic virtues of exchanging freely proposals about the common good. Imagine a world where people would be committed to changing their minds after an engagement with the evidence, as opposed to entrenchment behind impervious walls?

 The church is a haven not just for word and sacrament but also conversation and consolation. Often it is wise for pastors to play it safe and avoid controversial topics. But hopefully as pastors we seek both wisdom and courage to raise questions about controversial topics but in a venue that permits people to exercise conversation and consolation, to learn from one another, exercise give and take, find patterns of overlap along with genuine disagreements, and commit to as much peace and justice as can be had this side of Christ’s return.

 As leaders we look at each member, including those on the other side of the aisle, as expressions of God’s wonder and mystery, fellow creatures in God’s image, and even masks through whom God speaks, even if we do not see eye to eye with each all the time. Grasped by wonder and mystery, we are humbled to listen to others and emboldened to speak the truth. That said, with Paul, we ever endeavor to speak the truth in love.

**Prayer**

*Author of all life, I thank you that because of Jesus’ life-giving descent to a sinful world that you elevate me to share in your creative activity. Help me ever to be a good listener to my people and to have the courage to share your word with them. In Jesus, Amen.*