



people for worshipping in one way or the other. I appreciate the fact that we give churches the freedom to worship in a way which best fits their situation.

In the same way, we let churches organize with whatever structure best fits their needs. And the needs can differ widely from church to church. We're not a fan of the cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approach.

Firm, Free, and United

Those are a few of the areas in which we allow freedom, rather than imposing a dogmatic "This is how it must be!" stand. We stick to the basics. And where the Bible allows room for differing views, we prefer to allow room. I like that.

Our denominational manual says, "The Bible gives clear instruction on many issues, but on other issues, it leaves room for Christians of equal spiritual commitment and insight to disagree. The church's historic position has been to stand



firm on biblical absolutes, allow freedom where the Bible allows freedom, and maintain unity when disagreements arise."



Instead of taking extreme positions, we stick to the middle-of-the-road. We've been criticized for that. But I, for one, prefer the center lane.



IN THE Center Lane

There's a lot to be said for keeping to the middle of the road.

C. Ray Miller



A great strength of the United Brethren in Christ denomination is that we are flexible in how we operate and in what we believe. Some people may argue that we're wishy-washy and weak, afraid to take a strong stand one way or the other on

various issues. But I disagree.

Let me point out a few areas.

We have a Tremendous Confession of Faith

Our key beliefs are outlined in a seven-point statement called the Confession of Faith. It says we believe in the Triune God, Jesus Christ the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Bible, salvation, and the Christian ordinances. Those seven points contain the basic beliefs on which we cannot compromise.

But look at what it *doesn't* say. For instance, while stressing the importance of baptism, the Confession says nothing about *how* a person must be baptized. We give individuals the freedom to choose the method—sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.

I've baptized people in all of those ways. A few people want to be poured, and I've been free to accommodate them. Some want to be sprinkled. Most want to be immersed, but even

there you have differences, such as three times forward or one time backward. Any method is okay in the UB church.

The Bible commands us to be baptized, but doesn't specify what method to use. I appreciate the freedom we have, and the fact that for the

most part, we don't go beyond the Bible's teachings.

Let's take another issue: the Second Coming of Christ. The Confession of Faith says Christ *will* return, but doesn't say *how*.

Some church groups require belief in a particular view of the End Times. But in the UB church, you can be premillennial or amillennial, pre-trib, mid-trib or post-trib. It's not something we get hung up about.

Regarding salvation, we *could* spell out a series of steps for becoming a Christian, or set other rules about how, when, and where you can be saved. But we don't.

Likewise, the Confession of Faith affirms the crucial role of the Bible, but doesn't say which Bible version people must use. We all have our preferences, but we don't say, "This is the version you must read."

We Give Churches Freedom to Worship Differently

Over the years, I've attended about 200 of our 260 churches in North America, as well as churches on several of our mission fields. I have seen a wide range of worship styles and settings.

Some churches have very formal services, while others use a contemporary style with guitars, drums, and a team of singers. Some use a printed order of service, others don't. Some stick to the hymns, others use choruses. Some churches meet in beautiful sanctuaries, while others hold services in community halls.

Regardless of the setting or the worship style, I have sensed the Lord's presence. We don't criticize or condemn

