being church in a time of division
5 questions/conversations:

1. what is division?
2. why are we wired for division?
3. why is division the flip side of belonging?
4. how can we be part of the solution?
5. what about my congregation & denomination?
1. what is ... 
di - 
- vision
di - vision

two+ visions of a desirable future
(and how to get there)
in the early church ...

- let Gentiles in?
- keep biblical laws?
- keep cherished traditions?
- pursue non-violence?
- slavery? women?
- Emperor worship?
in american church history ...

- Native Americans as Canaanites?
- African slaves as sons of Ham?
- Irish, Italians, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese - welcome?
- Continue anti-Semitism?
- Equality for women?
There’s a time to thank God for division.

[Matthew 10]
today ...

- hide past, or truth & conciliation?
- deny or address global warming?
- LGBTQ - sin or diversity?
- Bible vs science, Bible and science?
- church and politics?
1 Corinthians 13:

It’s not just for weddings any more.

when love is the desired end, love must also be the means.
1 Corinthians 13
I will show you the most excellent way.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.
If I give away all I have,
And if I deliver my body to be burned,
but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind;
Love is not jealous or boastful;
Love is not arrogant or rude.
Love does not insist on its own way;
Love is not irritable or resentful; Love does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends.
As for prophecies, they will pass away;
As for tongues, they will cease;
As for knowledge, it will pass away.
For our knowledge and our prophecy are imperfect;
But when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.
When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned like a child, But when I became an adult, I gave up childish ways.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, But then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, Even as I have been fully understood.
So faith, hope, and love abide, these three;
   But the greatest of these is love.

I will show you the most excellent way.
   Follow the way of love.
Amen.
3-minute meeting
how does this understanding of competing visions help you understand tensions you feel with others - in the church and in society?

how could you put “their” vision of the future, or fears of the future, in terms they would agree with?
being church in a time of division
2. why are we wired for division?

the division is not just between us and them.

we are individually divided too.
THOSE WHO USE LEFT BRAIN MORE EFFICIENTLY

- It is logical
- Interested in mathematical expressions, uses language well
- It is pragmatic, cares the results
- Interested in clear results

The left brain is successful in academic and scientific subjects.

THOSE WHO USE RIGHT BRAIN MORE EFFICIENTLY

- It is emotional
- It deals with visual, artistic subjects
- Case the purpose and looks for goodwill
- It is intuitive, trusts its intuition

The right brain possesses humanistic features like emotionality, sympathy, empathy, feelings, and compassion.
brain stem: fear! danger! reflexes!
right brain: emotions, relationships
left brain: logic, independence

your brain is a committee.
All of us are primally attuned to fear and danger.

All of us are deeply attuned to relationships, feelings, belonging.

All of us are deeply attuned to independence, analysis, fairness, & argument.
Some of us are primarily attuned to fear and danger.

Some of us are primarily attuned to relationships, feelings, belonging.

Some of us are primarily attuned to independence, analysis, & argument.

How many of us are aware of these inner dynamics at work in ourselves?
because of our divided brain committee, we are all prone to bias - over a dozen forms of bias.
our brains are wired for over a dozen types of bias
3-minute meeting
how does this understanding of our brain committee help you understand tensions you feel with others?

how would you describe the state of your brain committee?

what’s going on with your counterparts (in terms they would agree with)?
being church in a time of division
3. why is division the flip side of belonging?

the problem of multiple belonging
the problem of multiple belonging
3-minute meeting
how does this understanding of multiple belonging help you understand why churches - and our nation - are under so much stress these days?

where do you feel the tension of multiple belonging?
being church in a time of division
4. how can we be part of the solution?
don’t be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds …

don’t be overcome with evil, but instead, overcome evil with good. (Romans 12)
THE SEVEN COMMITMENTS OF COMMON GOOD COMMUNICATION

I am committed to the seven values of Common Good Communication: example, integrity, curiosity, clarity, decency, fairness, and persistence.

1. EXAMPLE: I will lead by example in my communication, in public and in private. When I fall short, I’ll admit it, apologize, and reaffirm my commitment to lead by example.
2. INTEGRITY: I will put country over party, the whole truth over convenience, and the common good over self-interest, so I cannot be bought, blackmailed, or otherwise corrupted.

3. CURIOSITY: I will show uncommon curiosity by asking honest questions, seeking to understand others as I would want to be understood.
4. CLARITY: I won’t hold back, speak half truths, be intentionally vague, or attempt to deceive. I will self-report my feelings and my underlying values whenever possible.

5. DECENCY: I will strive to show genuine courtesy toward everyone, especially when we disagree. I will not mock, call names, or dehumanize any person or group. I will establish and uphold ground rules for respectful conversation whenever possible.
6. FAIRNESS: I will practice basic fairness in these five ways:
   - I won't compare my side’s best with the other side’s worst.
   - I will not assume the worst motives in my opponents.
   - I will acknowledge the upsides and downsides of all positions.
   - I will praise my counterparts when they deserve it, and challenge my allies when they deserve it.
   - I will notice who isn’t at the table, and I will do my part to be sure they are included and heard.
7. PERSISTENCE: I expect this work to be hard and I will stay in the room with difference, never giving up and always seeking the common good.
I am committed to the seven values of Common Good Communication:

eexample, integrity, curiosity, clarity,
decency, fairness, persistence.
3-minute meeting
what’s your response to these common good communication commitments?

have you been taught some or all of these before?

could you imagine our churches teaching skills like these?
being church in a time of division being church in a time of
5. what about my congregation and denomination?
four kinds of churches in times of division:
four kinds of churches in times of division:

nostalgic/complicit: mirror the division

eggshell: deny the division

tension: name and grapple with the division

creative: seize the opportunity
My proposal:
Give everyone a promotion.
Seriously.
3-minute meeting
where is your congregation?

where would you like to be, and why?

what would the cost be of going there?
  what would the benefits be?

what would the promotion idea look like for you?
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Let’s stay in touch!

www.brianmclaren.net
O God, whose love makes us one family,
May all honor you as holy and good.

Now, here on earth may your commonwealth come.

On earth, as in heaven, may your dreams come true.
Give us today our bread for today.

Forgive us our wrongs as we forgive.

Lead us away from the perilous trial; liberate us from the evil.
For the kingdom is yours and yours alone, 
the power is yours and yours alone, 
and the glory is yours and yours alone, 
Now and forever. Amen.
Now, here on earth may your commonwealth come.

On earth, as in heaven, may your dreams come true.

Alleluia

Alleluia

Amen
The Human Situation: What is the story that we find ourselves in?

God created the world as perfect, but because our primal ancestors, Adam and Eve, did not maintain the absolute perfection demanded by God, God has irrevocably determined that the entire universe and all it contains will be destroyed, and the souls of all human beings—except for those specifically exempted—will be forever punished for their imperfection in hell.

Basic Questions: What questions did Jesus come to answer?

Since everyone is doomed to hell, Jesus seeks to answer these questions: how can individuals be saved from eternal punishment in hell and instead go to heaven after they die? How can God help individuals be happy and successful until then? Since the human race is in such desperate trouble, Jesus seeks to answer this question: what must be done about the mess we're in?

The mess refers both to the general human condition and its specific outworking among his contemporaries: living under domination by the Roman empire, and divided into various competing sects.

Jesus' message: How did Jesus respond to the crisis?

Jesus says, in essence, “If you want to be among those specifically qualified to escape being forever punished for your sins in hell, you must repent of your individual sins and believe that my Father punished me on the cross so He won't have to punish you in hell. Only if you believe this will you go to heaven when everyone else is banished to hell.” This is the good news.

Jesus says, in essence, “Other people and groups—including your own religious leaders—are leading you farther and farther astray. I have been sent by God with this good news—that God loves humanity, even in its lostness and sin. God graciously invites everyone and anyone to question and reject what they have been told and instead follow a new path. Trust me and become my disciple, and you will be transformed, and you will participate in the transformation of the world, which is possible, beginning right now.”

This is the good news.

1 Of course, there are many modern western non-religious ontologies and framing stories, plus Eastern ontologies and framing stories—both religious and irreligious.

2 This reflects a Calvinistic Evangelical protestant version of the message. The popular Roman Catholic version might say, “You must believe in the teachings of the church and follow its instructions, especially those regarding sacraments.” The popular mainline or liberal Protestant
Let’s stay in touch!

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