

# **Editorial: Be the glue. Hold strong in fractious times.**

October 3, 2019

Hurting through the air at hundreds of miles per hour, I looked around at my fellow passengers. There we were—held thousands of feet above the ground, pushing forward in something a bit wider and three times longer than a charter bus—with nowhere to go if things went wrong.

The principles of aerodynamics tell us the shape and size of the wings combined with enough thrust from enough engines cause a plane to lift off the ground and stay aloft. The wings and the engines get all the glory.

What goes unnoticed is what holds the plane together. The wings and engines contribute to the flight, but it's good fasteners that get us to our intended destinations.

Be the glue in your world. Hold strong in fractious times.

## **The glue we don't see**

I doubt anyone else on the plane gave any thought to the fasteners holding strong as we fought gravity and intense physical forces. My wife would say I am right. She rolls her eyes and urges, "Don't," whenever I say I want to see the airworthiness certificate for the plane we've just boarded.

What we tend to think about are the things we see: the wings, cockpit, exits, seats, overhead bins, aisles, tray tables, inflight magazines, lavatories, flight attendants and pilots. All these are part of air travel. They are to flight what schools, neighborhoods, businesses, governments, civic organizations, arts, sports and so many other things are to society. They

are necessary, but they don't hold it together.

What holds our society together is what holds the church together and gives it its mission. The glue we don't see is the Spirit of Christ living in his followers.

This is a bold assertion because the church hasn't acted like glue holding things together. Rather, the church has contributed to the fractiousness of our times.

Be the glue in your world. Hold strong in fractious times.

## **The world needs glue**

Consider the headlines over the last several months. Even if you don't want to, even if you've had enough, consider the condition of our world reflected in the headlines.

Politicians are having a difficult time holding things together. Families are struggling to hold things together. Economies are straining to hold things together.

Even the natural world seems to be fraying. The Earth's climate is off balance. The Earth's bounty of water and oil is at the center of numerous and growing conflicts. Land is a precious commodity and fodder for war.

Addictions, diseases, racism and distrust are fracturing and eating our families, neighborhoods, communities and country.

The plane we're all passengers on is hurtling forward, and the acid of fraction is eating away the glue.

Body of Christ, be the glue in your world. Hold strong in fractious times.

# Is it ignorance or trust?

During the flight, gregarious businessmen made small talk. Jokes produced laughter like popcorn throughout the cabin.

Some of the passengers are in favor of impeaching President Trump. Some are opposed. No one told me this, but I know it's true. Despite our mixed opinions about the top news story of the day, we managed to make the trip in peace.

Was it because we simply didn't talk about it, that we stayed ignorant of our differences? Is it because we assumed we all think alike and didn't need to talk about it? Is it because you don't get into a fight about such things when you're 30,000 feet in the air?

Something held us together, and I wonder if any of us were aware of it. I wonder if any of us acknowledged it. I wonder if any of us gave any thought to our ability to travel together in such close quarters without a fight over what is dividing us on the ground.

Whether the passengers knew it or not, the glue held strong.

Be the glue in your world. Hold strong in fractious times.

## Acid of fraction is eating away the glue

Some blame Congress—specifically, the Democrats—for the current impeachment inquiry. Others blame President Trump—his words and actions—for what is happening.

We are not pointing the finger at ourselves, yet we elected—maybe not individually, but corporately—those we blame. Like Isaiah, we are wrapped up in the wrongs of our people.

Impeachment inquiries have taken place four times in 243 years of American history, three times in the last 45 years. Is this because our politicians are more corrupt than they've ever been? Are they more given to impeaching one another than they've ever been? Is impeachment more acceptable than ever?

In answering these questions, we must remember our politicians come from us. They are us. The fractiousness in our politics is not in Washington, D.C., or 50 state capitals. The fractiousness is in us.

We haven't given enough attention to the glue that holds us together and have allowed the acid of fraction to eat it away.

We can have the perfect aerodynamics and flying conditions, but if the glue doesn't hold the plane together ...

Be the glue in your world. Hold strong in fractious times.

## **Christ is the glue**

"In him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:17-18).

The body of Christ needs to remember itself. The body of Christ—the church—needs to give renewed attention to its place in the world, which is not power, prominence and prestige. The church's place is to carry, to proclaim, to live and to give the gospel of Jesus Christ—his life, death and resurrection, his lordship and reconciling work.

In, through and by him, the church is given the ministry of reconciliation and the charge to "go and make disciples of all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything" he taught (Matthew 28:19-20).

We all are called to enter the fray of these fractious times. We all must face the intense physical forces and fight the gravity of this world being eaten away by the acid of fraction. We must because we have the glue that holds the world together.

## Remember your line

The last thing the flight attendant said to us after we landed was, “Be kind to each other.”

And I thought, “Hey, that’s our line!”

Kindness is, after all, a fruit of the Spirit—sandwiched between patience and goodness; joined by faithfulness, gentleness and self-control; following love, joy and peace. Why do we have to be reminded by a flight attendant when it’s the body of Christ’s job?

I’m thankful the things holding the plane together didn’t quit on us and that I made it safely home. May the body of Christ be the glue this world needs, holding strong in fractious times so others will reach their home in Christ.

Be the glue. Hold strong.

*Eric Black is the executive director, publisher and editor of the Baptist Standard. He can be reached at [eric.black@baptiststandard.com](mailto:eric.black@baptiststandard.com) or on Twitter at [@EricBlackBSP](https://twitter.com/EricBlackBSP). The views expressed are those solely of the author.*