

## **“Holding the Church Together in Unsettled Waters”**

**Yellowstone Presbytery March 13 & 14, 2026**

*Inspired by Acts 27:17*

**Scripture Base:** Acts 27:17 describes sailors in a storm who “*passed ropes under the ship to hold it together.*” If ancient sailors can tie a boat together in hurricane winds, surely the church can stay united when someone on the left sits next to someone on the right during Sunday worship.

### **Introduction: When the Church Feels Like a Storm**

Every pastor knows this moment: You preach a sermon on unity, and afterward two members argue in the lobby about whether pineapple belongs on pizza—then somehow it turns political. The early church had storms too. But Acts 27:17 gives us a picture: **When the ship is stressed, you don’t abandon it—you reinforce it.**

So how do we “pass ropes under the ship” today?

Let’s explore **three ropes** that hold the church together.

### **Rope #1 — The Rope of Christ-Focused**

*“We are one in Christ, even if we vote differently.”*

**Illustration:** Imagine a football team where the quarterback refuses to throw to anyone who disagrees with him about politics. That team is going 0–16.

The church is the same. Our identity is not “Team Red” or “Team Blue”—it’s **Team Jesus**.

**Key Idea:** When we remember who we belong to, we stop treating each other like opponents and start treating each other like family.

#### **Practical Application:**

- Start conversations with what you share, not what you debate.
- Celebrate testimonies more than talking points.
- Remind each other: *“We’re rowing the same direction.”*

### **Rope #2 — The Rope of Humble Listening**

*“Unity doesn’t require agreement, but it does require understanding.”*

**Illustration:** Have you ever tried assembling IKEA furniture without reading the instructions? You end up with a bookshelf that leans like it’s praying.

Listening is the instruction manual of relationships. When we skip it, things wobble.

**Key Idea:** Listening doesn’t mean you surrender your convictions. It means you value the person more than the argument.

#### **Practical Application:**

- Ask, “Help me understand why this matters to you.”
- Assume the best, not the worst.
- Practice “holy curiosity.”

### **Rope #3 — The Rope of Mission Focus**

*“The church’s mission is bigger than any political moment.”*

**Illustration:** Picture a group of firefighters arguing about who started the fire while the building is still burning. Meanwhile, the fire keeps spreading.

Sometimes the church gets so caught up in cultural debates that we forget the mission: **Make disciples. Love neighbors. Heal the broken. Share the gospel.**

**Key Idea:** When the mission is clear, the noise becomes background.

#### **Practical Application:**

- Serve together—service melts division.
- Pray together—prayer resets priorities.
- Keep the main thing the main thing.

#### **Conclusion: Tie the Ropes Tight**

Acts 27:17 shows us that storms don’t destroy ships—**neglect does**. The sailors didn’t panic; they reinforced.

Today, the church doesn’t need everyone to think alike. It needs everyone to **hold the ropes**:

- **Identity in Christ**
- **Humble listening**
- **Mission focus**

When we do, the ship holds. The storm passes. And we reach the shore—**together**.