



EQUIPPING LEADERS FOR MISSIONAL OUTREACH

Learning to Live Missionally

**Inside this issue:
Thinking Missionally
in Purpose and
Vision, Leadership,
and Willingness to
Change**

Congregational health and growth are factors that are determined, to a large extent, by the nature of the leaders who are part of that ministry. It would be nice, we often think, that if we could find that secret potent (it is Halloween!) that would enable a ministry to grow, life would be easier. Sorry, no potent exists for that. In fact, in the dec-

ade of evangelism in our ELCA (the 1990's), a number of new programs and resources (equal to one per month for the entire decade) offered resources to ministries to encourage this kind of growth. From this we learned several things. First, even good programs produce no sustainable growth. Second, money put into a ministry from out-

side that ministry hampered the ministry more than it helped. Third, growth came from something else.

We do know that growth in congregational size is not a bad thing. Even just a cursory reading of Acts reminds us of that. So, how do growing congregations happen?

We know there three things are needed (cont. pg. 2)



Thinking Missionally: Purpose/Vision

The first key ingredient in living out a missional congregational lifestyle is to have a purpose/vision statement that is clearly stated, simply phrased, and memorable. So memorable, in fact,

that an eight-year old can repeat it when asked. In addition, it should be apparent that this purpose/vision statement is Biblically based and inspired by the work of the Holy Spirit.

In other words, its not enough to just have a great idea. After all, there are lots of those around. It is important, since we are the people of God, that we know we (cont. pg. 2)

Living missionally...

for growth. First, having a clear purpose/vision about what it is God wants this ministry to be about. Second, being willing to change anything for the sake of that purpose because we know God is in this. Third, leadership on the part of both the pastor and the lay people charged with leadership.

In the past, this aspect of ministry was not as important as it is today. The boats have stopped coming. To be a people in mission means returning to a more New Testament kind of faith. A faith that is proactive in



The boats are at rest as far as our European heritage is concerned.

sharing the Word in the daily contexts of work, play, leisure and neighborly living.

It also means being willing to engage those with our faith who are either slightly or very different than we are.

Living missionally means being open to the leading of the Holy Spirit using the gifts God has given us.



“Growth is not a dirty four letter word.”

Purpose/Vision continued...

reflect what it is that God wants us to be about, not just what we want to be about. This is more important than you might imagine.

In the midst of taking over a failed ministry under development, the new pastor/developer couple noted that this ministry did not have a God-discerned vision for itself. In the space of a short time, they had settled on “Making Christ Known” as their purpose/vision statement. They used it everywhere and made it an important part of their visible witness.

About two years later, the ministry had grown. They were now at an important decision point for ministry. As people debated the pro’s and con’s of various paths they could follow, discussion became intense. People’s

voices rose as they sought to make their point.

As happens in the midst of these kinds of discussions, the “eye of the storm” arrived and a sudden, unexpected hush fell on the group. In the silence of that moment, an eight-year old boy leaned over to his parents and whispered too loudly, “What does this do to help us make Christ known?” In that moment, the conversation of that group of people was transformed.

This is what a purpose/vision statement is supposed to do. It should be no longer than 12 words after the word “is.” That is to say, “The purpose of [name of church] is...(12 words maximum complete this statement). And, it should be phrased in such a way that it is something that sticks with people and stands out in their minds.

When decisions are made at every level of the ministry (Council, committee, groups of any kind), the question becomes how effectively that decision lives out the purpose/vision statement that God has planted in the hearts and minds of those who are part of the ministry.

How does one discern this purpose statement? Through scripture study and prayer. That is what helps people appreciate that this is a Biblically based statement and not just some cute statement derived from someone’s creativity and the current fads of the day.

Next time: What kind of Biblical study is most helpful to this?

Thinking Missionally: Willingness to change

The second key ingredient for growth in a ministry to occur is a willingness to change. Note, this willingness to change must be perceived as a Spirit-led willingness to change and not just change for the sake of change. There is too much of that around today for sure.

A Spirit-led willingness to change will overcome a multitude of hurdles (sins?). When people know and see that what we are about in ministry is something that God is active in leading, remarkable openness to new things comes along. However, this openness to change must be in response to the Vision/Purpose statement to which God has led you. One key factor in this willingness to change includes

an obvious focus on the issue at hand and not on the people. Jim Collins, in his book, "Good to Great," talks about the climate for change at work in eleven great companies. Without exception, in the interviews that occurred in each of those companies, people talked about the change process and the way they tried new things. If something didn't work, they problem solved what went wrong without pointing fingers at people. In every case, they re-examined their process in light of their vision. Then, they made appropriate decisions based on the outcome of that conversation. In fact, two of the eleven companies admitted one person did assign blame. That was the CEO standing in front of the bath-

room mirror pointing at him- or herself asking, "What could you have done differently?"

Finally, be aware of and expect resistance. Whenever we introduce change into any human system, we will automatically get resistance. It is normal. People get anxious. Change implies leaving something behind and we need time to grieve that. If we anticipate resistance and know it will occur, we are better prepared to respond to it. Remember, change means something must die in order for something new to live. Grief work is an important part of helping people deal with the new thing God is doing. Lean into the resistance, staying connected is important to helping the process move forward.

Thinking Missionally: Leadership

Leadership is the third key ingredient for growth to occur. The climate for leadership has changed dramatically in the past several years. Once upon a time (at least it seems so now), leadership was composed of what it was the called pastor brought to a ministry setting. In fact, we know that wasn't true in most cases.

Today, even more, effective leadership is com-

posed of the ordained leader and those others in the ministry called to leadership roles working together.

One of the significant insights from Natural Church Development points out that it is "empowered leadership" that makes a difference in ministry. That is to say,

leadership that is shared, encouraged, coached, and set free.

This can mean some real interesting things for the sake of where a ministry goes. But, if the main task is to follow God into the mission field in response to the vision God has given the ministry, the best advice is, "Get out of the way!"



Are we God's frozen chosen? Or are we people on fire?



To be effective, change must be accomplished in a climate of a Spirit-led willingness to change.



EQUIPPING LEADERS
FOR MISSIONAL
OUTREACH

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Texas Center for Mission

Purpose statement:

"...do justice...love kindness...walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6.8

Solicitation is sought for additional articles to be included in this publication. Submissions to this newsletter will be considered when they follow the above purpose statement as well as the Great Commission and Great Commandment.

Please submit requests for inclusion in this publication to

Rev. Stephen C. Kanouse,

Mission Director for the Northern Texas/Northern Louisiana Synod
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Where this newsletter came from...



Unimaginable things happen!

For some time, now, I've been giving some thought to how it is we could encourage a stronger, more effective response to the need to be people of mission. We live in a time when it is very easy to become despairing about our circumstances. In our work-a-day world, none of us keeps up with inflation anymore...unless we're talking about the measure

around our waists. We find a variety of reasons to abandon hope and chuck any belief in the Good News.

But there is more to our efforts and our call than that. We believe in a God who is a God of miracles. We confess a hope in a God who seeks to turn our weakness into God's strength. We follow the banner of a God who led Jesus to the Cross. Believing in such a God requires that we take risks for the sake of the kingdom. Not risks that are foolish and foolhardy. But risks that

open an invitation to God to do so what God so much wants to do: enter into our world and our lives with abundant Grace.

This newsletter is one way for me, at least, to risk the opportunity to allow God to do that. Where it will go is anyone's guess...only God knows for sure. But one thing is certain, God's reign is urging itself upon us, willingly or not.

I hope you receive this in a Spirit of openness and that what may be found here will give you thought and reflection on your called labor in the vineyard.