



EQUIPPING LEADERS FOR MISSIONAL OUTREACH

Transformation: The Key to Missional Thinking

Let's begin with the fundamentals...scripture and prayer. The key to missional thinking is now and always has been the ability to think in transformational kinds of ways.

This has been a challenge for many pastors and lay people who have been part of the Lutheran Christian confessional movement in recent years. What this means in a practical way we'll consider later in this newsletter. For now, let's consider what this means in terms of a beginning point.

The most beneficial place to begin, in my experience and learning, is with the fundamentals. And there is



nothing more basic than scripture. We could look at any number of passages of scripture in this regard, but let's begin with the one that is the most blatant: Romans 12.1-2. In this brief word to the church in Rome, Paul says, "...do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds..."

Now, the Greek word translated as "transformed"

in this passage is: *metamorphosis*. The word is in the first aorist passive tense. That is, it has the meaning of "...let yourselves be transformed..." But there is more.

The word, in the form that Paul uses it, has much more meaning than we can understand in just a few words. In fact, it has the implication of saying to the Romans (and, by extension, to us) that we are to be in a continuing state of transformation that begins in each new moment and continues without end into our future....forever! Oh, my pounding head. Just

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Seen on a church sign board recently:
"A church that is not reaching out is passing out."

Peter Drucker died, November 11, 2005

Perhaps you heard or read the news in the first week in November. It might have gone unnoticed on the part of most people. Peter Drucker died.

Unless you were involved in business in a leadership role, it is likely that this event would have passed

your awareness without much attention. Who was Peter Drucker, after all, and why would his death mean anything to any of us doing missional work?

Beginning in the 1940's, Peter Drucker became known as the most insightful and most innovative

business thinker of the second half of the twentieth century. He was a professor at Claremont Graduate University. He wrote a number of books on business turn-around activities and provided profound insight to how businesses can

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Transformation, continued...

when we thought we had it all figured out, along comes this.

Actually, this is nothing new. People of faith have always had to be in a state of transformational movement right from the beginning. This is what Paul is trying to tell this barely 15 year old mission in the heart of the known civilized world.

No doubt, the people of this mission in Rome had it all figured out just like many of us. They were likely people who saw themselves as worldly, with it, in step with and up on the times. Paul's words would have been dis-

Peter Drucker...

become more effective. Now, before we get too concerned with church as business, let the record be clear. The church is a missional activity of God revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the one hand, it is not a business. On the other hand, ministry that is transformational knows that everything is on the table and nothing is "sacred" when we consider the options for insight, learning, and growth in understanding about being missional.

Among the several comments made about Peter in the audio obituary that I heard about him on National Public Radio was the observation that his contributions to the world of business included the insight that finances (money) was often not the issue in helping a business to turn around.

The curious thing about this

trussing to them the same as they are to us.

Transformation implies that we are in need of learning something new that is different from what we thought we already knew. That is true. The troubling thing is that we are never done doing that.

The world changes, no matter where we find ourselves. Many ministries that I work with complain, lament, or are in despair about declining numbers in worship, Sunday School, and other activities. When I work with a ministry in the area of vision and purpose, one of the things that people respond to with the

is that while Peter came to this conclusion several decades ago, it has taken us in the missional world a long time to catch up to this truth. Consider this: In the latter part of the 1990's, over a period of five years, the Division for Outreach provided financial support to 165 ministries in order to assist them in redevelopment. Those ministries received more than \$2 million during that time. Of those ministries, at the end of five years, a handful had closed, a handful had remained about the same, and the rest had continued in decline. The impact of numerical growth on the part of those ministries was a net *loss* of about 3,600 people overall to the ELCA. This seems to be rather poor stewardship no matter how we look at it.

What Peter pointed out decades ago was that money is-

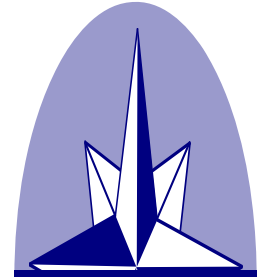
most energy is the word that their vision/purpose statement has a shelf life of about three years. That's right... three years. Within that space of time, the world for that ministry will have changed enough, in multiple ways, so that their vision/purpose statement will need some tending and revising in order to remain appropriate for the work that God is calling them to do.

Now, what is the purpose of that Holstein on the front page of this newsletter? What do you see when you look at it? Just a cow? Look again...be transformed by the renewing of your minds.

n't the answer. He stressed that marketing and innovation were.

From a transformational perspective, marketing means purpose/vision. It is important to know your target audience and to know what it is that God is calling you to be and do in relationship to that group of people.

From a transformational perspective, innovation means being willing to try anything to reach the people you discern that God has given you to reach no matter how crazy or odd it might seem. Remember, we are to be fools for Christ, right? Only, let's be Christ-centered fools, rooted in the Good News, and clear about our call to be the presence of Christ in our communities. That is something about which even Peter would give approval.



*"The church is
a missional
activity of God
revealed in the
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Jesus Christ."*

Transformational Bible Study

In the previous issue of this newsletter, there was mention made of some insight for Bible study in this edition. There are two key components to effective work with people in relationship to growing ministries. One of those key components is effective Bible study.

The traditional or usual way in which Bible study is done in most Lutheran congregations is that the pastor or other generally acknowledged wizened "saint" of the congregation provides a relative monologue to a collection of listeners who receive the information passively without much in the way of active input. At the end of about 45 to 50 minutes, people depart somewhat more rested than before but not necessarily engaged in the process by which they are themselves transformed by the Word. Now, excuse me, but I have always thought that the encounter with the Word was to be a transformative experience.

One way to move people from being passive receivers

of the Word to active engagers of the Word is to invite them into the process whereby they are encouraged to wrestle with it on their own terms. That can be done by inviting people to do Bible study in dyads or triads. And, an excellent place to begin is with the Acts of the Apostles, especially if you are going to work on your vision/purpose statement.

People are invited to meet with one or two other people of their choosing (same gender). They have permission to meet whenever they want and wherever they want during the week. As the leader, you only ask them to be accountable to meeting. In preparation for meeting, they are to read two chapters of the assigned biblical book.

When they meet, they engage in the study this way. For the first ten minutes, they check in with each other. Relationship building is important. Second, they spend twenty

minutes talking about the assigned reading using these questions: What are people of faith doing in this text?

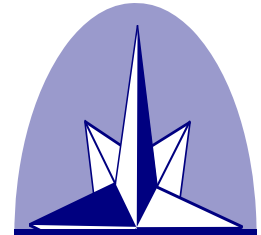
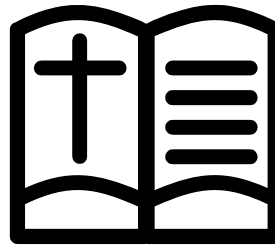
What is God doing in this text? What is the Spirit up to in this text? And what does

this tell us about a possible vision for who we are as God's people?

There are other things that could be addressed in the text but this sets the stage.

Finally, for the last fifteen minutes (no less!), they pray. They pray for each other, for their ministry, for the vision God is creating for them, for the world, for their place in God's design and plan, and more!

Bible study done in this manner is transformational because it engages people in the process and moves them to active participants. And, its Lutheran in the spirit of Luther's translation of scripture into the language of the people. To talk in more detail about this process, give me a call!



*"To truly
encounter the
Word is to be
transformed
by the
Word."*

Transformational epidemics...

In "The Tipping Point," Malcolm Gladwell explores how it is that little things can make a big difference. The importance of this observation struck me the other day as I thought about how it is we go about encouraging transformational and missional thinking in ministries.

The reality is people often believe that transformational ministry is about big shifts in thinking, large movements in style, and turning everything

up-side down. In fact, the truth is that missional transformational thinking isn't about the big stuff.

Gladwell's premise, that little things make a big difference, is illustrated like this: He says, take a very large piece of paper, fold it once in half, then repeat until it has been folded 50 times. Now, in your mind's eye, how thick or tall is that folded over paper going to be? Some people say as thick as a tele-

phone book. Some, being what they consider to be ridiculous, venture to say it will be as high as a refrigerator. The real answer, according to Gladwell, is that the stack will be the approximate distance from the earth to the sun. This is an example of geometric progression.

The human mind has a hard time with this kind of reality. The end result seems so far out of proportion to the

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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
and the Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America.



The five holy, sacred,
secular days for the
unchurched world...
ponder how you can crea-
tively take advantage of
them in your context!

First: Halloween!
Second: Mothers' Day!
Third: Christmass Eve
Fourth: Easter
Fifth: Valentine's Day!
Consider this for building
relationships between
spouses and significant
others! Its coming soon!

Transformational epidemics continued...

cause. Even now, some of you are still shaking your head back and forth not daring to believe that this could be true. However, consider this, one more fold of the paper would make the stack as tall as the distance from the earth to the sun and back!

For the sake of what this means in a missionally focused transformational ministry, consider this. It is the small stuff done in a transformational way, repeated over and over again, that has the biggest impact on the ministry. Certainly, we look for and hope for the big impact. But the awareness is that doing transformational ministry is like spreading an epidemic. Big changes follow from small events.

In light of what we are learning about Natural Church Develop-

ment and its ability to impact a ministry, this is significant. The biotic principle of Interdependence reminds us that as we work on smaller, less offensive changes in the climate for mission and ministry in the life of a congregation, this has an effect on all other parts of the ministry as well. And it is this geometric progression that will result in a larger than expected outcome eventually.

The difficulty is often in sticking with it and helping people remain faithful to the vision toward which God is calling them while the little things begin to change the culture and the focus of the ministry. Our culture is focused on the very quick fix. That is why having a very clear, powerful vision for mission that is a biblically based vision-path is so important.