

Marks of a Missional Congregation: Leadership

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Synod Minister

Leadership is the fourth mark of a missional congregation, based on a series from Rev. Dr. Stephen Bouman, Executive Director for Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission, ELCA.

The central mark of a missional congregation remains constant – Resurrection: A missional congregation lives in the power of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In the Risen Christ all things are possible.

Missional congregations at their best are led by healthy, Spirit-filled leaders who support one another and the mission of the congregation. Leadership means staff, elected leaders, and volunteers. It means anyone who takes on the work of life within a community of faith. Healthy visionary leadership is necessary for mission. Leadership grounded in the salvation of Jesus Christ is central to the work of discipleship.

Leadership is nurtured, leaders are trained and time is taken for leadership development in healthy missional congregations. This is true whatever the size of congregation. This is true whether the leadership is paid or volunteers. It can be as simple as taking time for learning at the beginning of a meeting. It certainly means praying together and engaging in Bible study.

There are expectations of leaders: regular attendance at worship and Holy Communion, prayer, Bible study, giving – stewardship, a commitment to the vision the congregation has for mission, dependability, and the ability to communicate and cooperate in a way that supports the congregation and its work.

There is more. Might it be that everything a congregation does is an opportunity for leadership development? Nurturing one another in faith and strengthening one another for the sharing of our faith is what we do as congregations. As missional congregations it is part of who we are that we grow leaders bold in proclaiming Jesus as Lord.

Peace,

Pr. Linda

Baptism Transforms, Just Like Pickling!

Greetings!

We are all familiar with the ritual of baptism, and we all understand the concept of being dipped in the water of baptism to be washed and cleansed from our sin. Not quite as easy to understand and therefore not quite as familiar to us is the idea that in and through baptism we are transformed. A pastor recently shared some information with me that made the idea of our being “transformed” through baptism much easier to understand.

Among the early uses of the Greek *bapto*, which means “to dip in or under,” was a recipe for pickles that tells in the instructions to “bapto” the cucumber in brine until it is completely transformed into a pickle. Now that is a concept we all can understand! We can readily see the differences between a cucumber and a pickle, and we understand the process of the brine working on the cucumber to transform every tiny bit of it into a pickle. It is totally transformed. No part of it remains just a cucumber. It is totally new and different. It may have essentially the same outer appearance—or at least a fairly similar one—but inside? Oh my! What a difference “bapto” has made! It can never go back to being a cucumber. It is a pickle forever.

In the sacrament of baptism we pray “that those who are washed in the waters of baptism may be given new life.” Through the words and the water we are now a child of God. We say “You belong to Christ, in whom you have been baptized.” We say, “You have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.” We have gone from being an ordinary human being to being part of the body of Christ, and we now share in the mission of “bearing God’s creative and redeeming word to all the world.”

And just as the pickle cannot go back to being a cucumber, so we will never again NOT be a child of God!

Blessings in Christ,

Shirley



Shirley Gangstad
Synod Vice President