

Change; Being Made New

by Pastor Helga Jansons Director for Evangelical Mission

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!
2 Corinthians 5:17

What does Easter mean to you? When you come to church on Easter Sunday and during the season of Easter, what do you expect to happen? Many come to hear about the power of God in the risen Christ Jesus. We want to be reminded of God's love for us, and how far God goes to be in relationship with us. We listen for God's grace; undeserved love. It is a time to hear an inspiring sermon and to receive encouragement. Perhaps it will change our perspective, our understanding of who God is, and how God acts, and impact our self-understanding in relation to God. Easter may be a time to be challenged to behave differently, perhaps to be more loving or forgiving. It may be a time to be make a commitment to live out our faith more intentionally; stewardship. But I want more than that!

I want to be made new. I want the resurrection power to transform my life, not in any way that I can even determine or predict. I want to be made new in Christ whatever that looks like. I want to be joined with Jesus so that I am clothed with Christ. Maybe I won't even recognize myself! It is a bit scary don't you think? But I don't want any less than this for Easter, otherwise it is like any other time. Of course the resurrection power is at work every day but there is something about being receptive and ready for anything to happen during this season. It involves change. Does this sound good to you?

We prefer the known to the unknown, even when we don't like the way things are. However "If we do what we've always done, we'll be what we've always been." We want young people to come to church but we don't want anything to change. We can all joke about how Lutherans don't like change, and we fear it. But actually the experts say we fear loss, not change. "People do not resist change, per se. People resist loss" says Ron Heifitz in his books on Leadership and Change (or watch him on YouTube). Loss is a part of Good Friday which doesn't feel "good" at all. The fastest growing church I have been involved with (not a Lutheran church) changed their worship services to using a rock band and the older people didn't like the music at all. But when I talked to them they said they would put up with anything so as to have young people in church. They have quadrupled in size and have 3,000 for worship every Sunday and have 9 services every Sunday morning in 3 different venues. The older people got their traditional service back! I guess listening to Christian rock music was their Good Friday, but now they are thrilled.

Transformational Ministry workshops are being offered around the Synod (next one May 14th , 9-noon, at Trinity Lutheran, Coeur D'Alene) and there are 4 main things that Transforming churches have in common: 1. Sense of purpose 2. Willingness to change 3. Shared leadership 4. Relationships; with God, their faith community and the broader community. In this workshop the stages of change are discussed from feeling unsettled, all the way to integrating the change.

Are you willing to be made new by the power of God? When the one who was seated on the throne in Revelation 21:5 says "See, I am making all things new" does that sound exciting to you or scary, or both? I feel both, but I want it anyway. I want to grow into Christ and be transformed by Christ. I am willing to change, I think. Are you? May you be made new by the power of the risen Christ!

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2

