

CROSS Connection



The Cross Connection is a monthly publication of the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod published for its clergy, members, deacons, lay leadership and ecumenical partners.

April 2017

God's beloved people,

Well phooey.

It's Lent, the rain (or snow) doesn't want to let up, runny nose is hanging on, Lenten disciplines seem boring, Syrian and Sudanese children show us what real suffering looks like, taxes are due, and I can't make heads or tails of the reports from the Congressional Budget Office. Wish I knew who to blame for this funk. Phooey, just phooey!

On the other hand, the Zags roll on, some of you are enjoying spring training, and the sun has risen high enough in the sky that it has crested Buckskin Mountain over Holden Village, leading to all sorts of silliness wearing bathing-suits in the snow. "The Sun will win!" was my almost-end-of-winter shout into the new morning hour of darkness occasioned by Daylight Savings. "The Sun will win," was as much a prayer as confidence!

By the way, this is a great time to pray for Holden as they prepare to open to guests for the first time in four years. In particular, pray for and talk with young people, retired people and others who might give two weeks of volunteer service. The need is great! See www.holdenvillage.org.

So what to do about the pre-spring funk? One of the Lutheran distinctives is that we're comfortable with paradox, the mystery that two apparently opposite realities can be true at the same time. For instance we know that we are both saints and sinners, and that we describe this as being bound and free. This is our spiritual reality and we don't get uptight about it.

So in the spirit of Daylight Savings I propose that we "borrow time" from one moment and insert it into the present funk. The word "prolepsis" means "to take beforehand." In theological terms my professor Ted Peters talks about prolepsis this way: "...the first thing God did for the world was to give it a future" and "It is the continuing divine work of future-giving that is the source of life and being." So I propose that we borrow the reality of Easter during the low days of Lent. After all, the Sundays aren't counted in the Lenten 40 days. They are still Easter days!

Thanks for letting me think this through with you. I think, in the course of writing to you, I've remembered resurrection into the present and it makes a difference on this cloudy day. "The Son will win!" The Son will win, indeed!

And here are two resources for both deepening the Lenten days through the discipline of alms-giving, The children in So. Sudan and Syria need us to remember them.

https://community.elca.org/southsudanrelief?_ga=1.25910260.833340902.1489175062, or
http://www.elca.org/40days?_ga=1.138048505.833340902.1489175062

Bp Martin Wells



Presiding bishop

The good Samaritan

By Elizabeth A. Eaton



I have been thinking a lot about the parable of the good Samaritan lately (Luke 10:25-37). Parts of it are so familiar—the unfortunate victim, the robbers, the priest, the Levite, the Samaritan—that I miss points of deeper meaning.

We all know the compassion and generosity of the Samaritan has become the standard by which we measure our response to suffering. Hospitals are named Good Samaritan. All 50 states have a Good Samaritan law on the books. I always imagined (or hoped) that I would act like the good Samaritan were I ever in a similar situation.

There are two other characters connected to this story that I don't always think about: the lawyer and Jesus. Theirs was not a casual conversation. The lawyer was looking to test Jesus. "Teacher, he said, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus answers with a question: "What is written in the law?"

Being a good lawyer the man answered from Deuteronomy and Leviticus: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." Case closed. Conversation over.

But the lawyer couldn't let it go: "... wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'"

We know the man wanted to test Jesus and justify himself so his question was not an earnest inquiry about the Torah. Are some people my neighbor and some people not? How far does hospitality have to extend? Can there be limits to compassion? What is reasonable: Family? People on my block? My congregation? Fellow citizens? And, conversely, whom can I exclude? People across town or around the world? Who is my neighbor?

It's in answer to this question that Jesus tells the parable—a parable designed to be as provocative as possible.

We call the Samaritan "good" but that word is not found in Scripture. No Jew would call a Samaritan "good" nor would any Samaritan call a Jew "good." Samaritans and Jews regarded each other as ceremonially unclean, socially outcast and heretical. They would not have come up automatically in the neighbor category.


It's not clear that the beaten Jewish man would have been entirely thrilled that he had been helped and touched by the Samaritan. (Think of the *All in the Family* episode where Archie Bunker realizes he has received a blood transfusion from an African-American man.)

Now it's Jesus' turn to ask a question: "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

This becomes the question for us and for these times. When we ask, "Who is my neighbor?" we sort people into categories. Is the refugee my neighbor? Is the Muslim my neighbor? Is the Jew my neighbor? Is the Latina my neighbor? And on and on. This makes for increasingly smaller neighborhoods. And this question can be driven by fear and suspicion. Left to ourselves we turn in and away.

Thank God that God has not left us to ourselves. Our new life in Christ leads us to ask and answer a different question. Not, "Who is my neighbor?" but "How are we neighbor?"

The world is a dangerous place—just check any news source or social media. There are people who mean to do harm to our country. Fear and the threat of danger divide us and constrict us. But we live in the hope of the resurrection and in the certainty of the redemption of the world through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We no longer ask, "Who is my neighbor?" The question is now, "How are we neighbor?"

The lawyer answered Jesus' question about who was neighbor to the man beaten by robbers with: "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, and to us, "Go and do likewise." 

A monthly message from the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Her email address: bishop@elca.org.

This column originally appeared in the March issue of *Living Lutheran*. Reprinted with permission.

Reflections on Rural Ministry

Pastor Donald Short Pilgrim Lutheran - Othello, WA

We have a tendency in pastoral ministry to believe that rural ministry is for beginners, and that people with more experience should serve larger churches in urban areas. I have been in rural ministry for most of my pastoral career and have loved it and here are some reasons why:

Firstly, I have seen that rural parishioners are some of the kindest people on the planet. They are generous with what they have. People in rural areas are quick to welcome you into their homes, share their best recipes and delight when you take the time to hear their stories.

Second, and don't take it personally, but rural people are not going to do everything the pastor wants them to do. They have seen you before. The new pastor comes charging out of seminary full of bold ideas and fresh insights and is ready to turn the world upside down. People in rural areas are very happy to 'set him straight' on how the 'real world' works.

Third, people in rural areas are mission minded. They are more than happy to support the youth as they prepare to go to the next youth gathering, but they will not always welcome the new constitution that is supplied by the church-wide office.

Fourth, people in rural areas usually know their neighbors, and sometimes know them too well. Evangelism programs that are designed to 'get to know your neighbors' are useless in small towns because the neighbor is already known. Most people can tell you not only what church their neighbor goes to, but who built the church, who the best pastor in memory is, and what is keeping that neighbor from going to your church.

Fifth, when a new pastor comes to their church most people in rural areas want that pastor to know one thing, and one thing only. Please love them. That is enough. When you let them love you back it forms a beautiful circle of love.

STEWARDSHIP: MISSION MOMENTS *at Celebration Lutheran Church, East Wenatchee* *By Pastor Dave Haven*

The question, "What Have We to Offer?" is the title of a song by Ray McKeever. After listing a number of possible answers to the question, the final lyric sums it all up: "What have we to offer? What have we to give? Lives we will give." It is in this spirit that members and friends of Celebration Lutheran are invited to share Mission Moments while the offering is taken during worship (the time allotted is determined by how long it takes to take the offering). Reflecting on how they live out their calling as Christians, a simple question is posed to them: "Why do you do this?" Telling their stories generates conversation, inspiration, and, at times, participation in the various shared endeavors. Sharing a Mission Moment helps interpret how God works through us – "God's Work. Our Hands."

Celebration Lutheran Church's Stewardship Team is responsible for inviting people to participate in Mission Moments, but it is not uncommon for other ministry teams and groups within the congregation to also recommend folks.

The idea came as result of the Stewardship Team's desire to foster a climate of year-round awareness of God's good gifts as manifested through God's beloved people. Akin to "temple talks" or "personal testimony," Mission Moments present an opportunity to share stories like: buying an extra bag of rice at Costco and dropping it off at the local food bank, volunteering to read to children at a local elementary school, weeding CLC's church garden, playing an instrument to enhance music during worship, writing Christmas letters to refugees to shine a little light on their plight, or sharing who was a mentor in one's faith formation.

I Love to Tell the Story

by **Pastor Helga Jansons** Director for Evangelical Mission

It is my guess that more Lutherans would prefer to sing the hymn *“I Love To Tell The Story”* than to actually tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love. We are “Shy Lutherans” who do not want to impose our faith in a pushy way. We want to be authentic, and while we worry about the decline of our beloved churches, we do not want to be self-serving Christians who just care about “church growth”. Many of us have been Lutherans since the “cradle” (or crib) and we have a culture of a long-standing tradition without the excitement that new Christians feel. After a conversion experience people tend to be on fire.

Another reason Lutherans hesitate to “tell the story” is that many feel poorly equipped to talk about their faith and the Bible, and therefore would find the following verse scary: 1 Peter 3:15 *“Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands of you and accounting for the hope that is in you; yet, do it with gentleness and reverence.”*

There is a lot to know about the Bible and Lutheran theology and so it is easy to feel inadequate. But I have found that Lutherans know more than enough to tell the story of Jesus’ love. It’s not like we need a “lesson plan” to talk with someone! You could probably say something about God and Jesus, and even the Holy Spirit. If asked “Why is God central to your life” you may be able to answer that. Or, why do you go to church? You may know your favorite Bible story or verse, or at least basically how it goes. A favorite hymn? You might even be able to say why you are a Lutheran. Any of these are enough to begin a conversation about God with someone. Plus, it is just as important to listen to someone else’s faith journey or struggles, as it is to say anything at all.

To develop confidence talking about God takes practice for anyone, even pastors. Lutherans tend to shy away from the word “evangelism” thinking that there are certain people who have the gift of sharing their faith. But even though I am comfortable talking about God with anyone, I have had to think about what I most wanted to say. People are not ready for a sermon on the tennis court! Or at the store. It has also been important to think about the scripture that most speaks to my life, makes a difference or shapes my life, and why. Matthew 28: 20, the last verse of the gospel always brings me to the edge of tears. But why?

Since God matters so much to me, I need people to talk to about the ups and downs of my faith. People whom I can trust, are mature, and are able to handle my questions and thoughts, and have a willingness to share their own. As a result of many conversations about faith, I have developed a comfort level in talking with people about God. It impacts the way I visit people as a pastor too. It is more important to talk about our faith journey than a person’s medical condition since I am not a doctor or nurse.

I know that my faith wavers even within one day. My beliefs may seem constant when it comes to my basic theology. But in my daily life when I am wondering what on earth God is up to, it is still a “reverent best guess” (Franklin D. Fry’s term). And while I may say to myself “Trust God 100%” that is not how I always feel. Getting through a day can be hard. I don’t think any of us have faith “in the bag”. It is not that static; there is no “I’m saved” and that is all there is to faith.

But I am convicted by the words from Romans 10:14 *“But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?”* Unless we tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love we will have lost an opportunity to share what matters most to us, with someone who needs it.



Join the Holden Village Summer Staff!

Holden Village, an ecumenical retreat center in the North Cascades mountains of Washington and home of Holden Evening Prayer, is seeking summer staff! Summer volunteer staff can serve for as little as two weeks and for as long as 3-4 months. As a staff person, you will have access to hiking trails in the neighboring Glacier Peak Wilderness; teaching sessions from faculty that include Nadia Bolz-Weber and Alan Storey; and opportunities to create pottery, weaving, and other arts and crafts.

Room and board are provided to all volunteer staff. Positions are available for ages 18 and up, and options are also available for families with school-age children. Visit www.holdenvillage.org/volunteer and check out the Short Term Staff, Key Staffing Needs, and Family Volunteers pages for a full list of open positions. We hope to see you in the Village!

P.S. Interested in visiting Holden but not quite ready to volunteer? Check out www.holdenvillage.org/visit to learn more about visiting Holden as a guest.

Lutheran Campus Ministry at EWU

*Invites you to a **LUAU!***

*Come to our
Annual Benefit Dinner and Auction*

April 29, 2017

Doors open at 5 PM. Dinner at approximately 6 PM

*Advent Lutheran Church
13009 E Broadway
Spokane, WA 99216*

Dress Hawaiian

*Complimentary dinner of Hawaiian pulled pork and fixings
Beer and wine available with donation*

*Silent auction 5-6PM | Dessert auction following dinner
Guests will be asked to donate to the ministry*

Please register at www.lcmewu.com or call 509.951.5701

If you register 8 people, you will be entered into a drawing!

Call Process Status

A Process beginning/congregational study	I Interim	AP Associate/Assistant Pastor
B Names received or on-site visits in process	P Pastor	VP Visitation Pastor
C Call in process/issued	CP Co-Pastor	D Deacon
NV New Vacancy	LP Lead Pastor	L Lay Position
TC Term call	SP Supply Pastor	TM Transition Minister
VP Visitation Pastor		(available for the open-ended call)

POS	LOCATION/CONGREGATION	STATUS	PASTORAL CARE	
P	Boise, ID – King of Glory	B	John Hergert	I
P	Chewelah, WA – St. Paul Lutheran	NV	Supply	SP
P	Davenport, WA - Zion	NV	Stacey Friedlein	TEEM
P	Ephrata, WA - Holy Trinity	NV	Karen Edwards	I
P	Genesee, ID - Genesee/St. John	A	Supply	
P	Goldendale, WA – Christ the King	NV	Mary Johnson	SP
P	Leavenworth, WA - Faith	NV	Misael Fajardo-Perez	I
P	Lind, WA – Good Hope Lutheran	NV	Ginny Johnson	SP
P	Mattawa, WA – Grace Lutheran	NV	Ginny Kreckling	I
P	Otis Orchards, WA – Peace Lutheran	NV	David Olson	TM
P	Pasco, WA – First Lutheran	C	Phylis Stromme	I
P	Quincy, WA - St. Paul Lutheran	NV	Karen Edwards	I
P	Spokane, WA – Bethlehem Lutheran	NV	Steve Wee	SP
P	Spokane, WA – Messiah Lutheran	NV	Betty Krafft	SP
P	Spokane, WA – Prince of Peace	B	Bob Chenault	I
P	Spokane, WA – St. Mark’s Lutheran	A	Eric Dull Kate LePard	CP

Rev. Mark Nelson has been called to a new position with our churchwide partners. He has accepted the call as Candidacy and Leadership Manager for Regions 1 and 2, and will remain rostered in the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod.

Advent Lutheran Church Seeks Choir Director

13009 East Broadway Avenue • Spokane Valley, WA 99216 • (509) 928-7733
www.AdventLutheranSpokane.org

Advent Lutheran Church of Spokane Valley Washington is currently seeking applicants for the position of Choir Director. This is a part-time position. Copies of the job description and application form are available at AdventLutheranSpokane.org or at the church office. Please send a resume and completed application form to Advent Lutheran Church, 13009 East Broadway, Spokane Valley, WA 99216. The application deadline is March 31st.

Have Information You Would Like to Share?

Contact us at the synod office if you would like to contribute to the newsletter,
 promote an event on Facebook or the synod webpage:
 509-838-9871 gibd@ewaidsynod.org

Pray with us

We ask that you keep the ministry of the church, our synod, and the whole world in your prayers, as well as the people listed below . . .



Pastor Ginny Krekling and family, on the recent lose of her mother Helen Rasmussen in Pensacola, Florida on Feb 4th. Celebration of Life funeral services were held on Sunday Feb 26th in Pensacola.

Pastor Ginny Johnson and her family are pleased to announce that her mother is alive and well, in contrast to what was mistakenly printed here last month.

Prayer Requests . . . to be included or removed from the Synod Prayer Request list, please send your request to the synod office@ewaidsynod.org, or call 509-838-9871.

The Region 1 Financial Services Office Has Moved

The address for submitting Mission Support remains unchanged at:

Their new physical address is:

4306 132nd St SE
Mill Creek, WA 98012

PO Box 94432
Seattle, WA 98124-6732

New Phone Numbers are:

P: 206-624-0093
F: 206-626-0987

Early Registration Ends April 7! 2017 Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod Assembly

Friday May 19 through Sunday May 21 - Doubletree Hotel ~ Spokane, WA

Theme: *“grace draws us in, grace sends us out.”*

Lutheran World Relief Quilts

Our quilters have been busy. They recently finished one quilt for Lutheran World Relief and prepared a couple backs ready for next week. The group decided they would like to continue making quilts for Lutheran World Relief.

So if anyone has any gently used sheets or large pieces of cotton fabric to donate we would greatly appreciate it. We could also use quilt batting or money to purchase some to complete quilts.

Lutheran World Relief sent 346,170 quilts to 15 countries in 2015!

Please contact the synod office to find out how you can help!

TRANSFORMATIONAL MINISTRY WORKSHOP

APRIL 29, 2017 10AM- 3PM

PRINCE OF PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

8441 N Indian Trail Rd. Spokane WA

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

For clergy and lay people

- Learn what Mission Redevelopers do to grow ministries
- Practice the skills of going into the neighborhood: door knocking and visiting community leaders
- How to develop relationships in the community
- Outreach
- Community Organizing methods; your congregation can make a difference

RSVP by April 20th to Helga Jansons (Dir. for Evangelical Mission, EWAID synod)

Helga.jansons@elca.org or phone 509 380 7122

Lunch will be provided – free will offering

This is the second part of the ELCA Transformational Ministry training that is offered across the country. This is the first time it is being offered in our synod by our trained TM team. There are other parts to Transformational Ministry that many people have taken across the synod which includes developing a Purpose statement, Guiding Principles and a Mission Plan. You do not need to have done this work in order to attend the Engaging the Community workshop.

Resources for TM part 1 can be provided upon request.

MORE ASSEMBLY INFORMATION

March 24 is the deadline for nomination and resolution submittal for the upcoming Assembly. For more details about the assembly, visit <http://www.ewaidsynod.org/2017synodassembly.html>

For more information regarding the Office of Bishop in the ELCA and Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod, visit <http://www.ewaidsynod.org/2017bishopelection.html> - the videos there were compiled at last year's Bishop's Convocation with the Rev. Chris Boerger, Secretary ELCA; Rev. Dr. Kirsi Stjerna; Rev. Marcus Lohrmann and Bishop Martin Wells.

TRANSFORMATIONAL MINISTRY WORKSHOP

MAY 6, 2017 10AM- 3PM

CENTRAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

1604 W Yakima Ave. Yakima 98902 WA

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

For clergy and lay people

- Learn what Mission Redevelopers do to grow ministries
- Practice the skills of going into the neighborhood: door knocking and visiting community leaders
- How to develop relationships in the community
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**EASTERN
WASHINGTON
IDAHO SYNOD**

of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

314 S. Spruce St., Suite A
Spokane, WA 99201-5823
509-838-9871



**April 2017
Newsletter**

*Let Down the Nets
Lifting Our Vision
Jesus First, Last, Always
God's Grace, Our Gratitude
The Spirit Powers Us
No Fear! Transformation
Connections Multiply Miracles
Go, Tell & Serve*



Please reproduce any and all articles for publication in congregational newsletters or bulletins.
The **Cross Connection** is also available on the synod website at
<http://www.ewaidsynod.org/synodpublications.html>.
Deadline for articles is the 5th of each month.

Synod Calendar

March 2017

- 24 Deadline for Assembly nominations and resolutions
- 27 Assembly Planning Committee meeting
Advent Lutheran - Spokane Valley, WA

April 2017

- 2 Sprague Sausage Feed
- 7 Assembly Registration Deadline
- 28-29 Estate Planning for the Heart - Ritzville, WA
- 29 EWU Campus Ministry Auction - Advent Lutheran
- Spokane Valley
- 28-30 Faith Forming Catechumenate
Grace Lutheran - Wenatchee, WA

May 2017

- 6 Mission Interpreter Training - Columbia Basin
- 10 Rural Ministry Resources meeting
All Saints - Spokane, WA



Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our Hands

Staff

- Bishop The Rev. Martin Wells
- Director for Evangelical Missions .. The Rev. Helga Jansons
- Program Administrator Cathy Steiner
- Assembly Manager Julia Bennett
- Communication Director Gib Dominguez
- Net-Worker Rev. Phylis Stromme
- Net-Worker Rev. David Kappus
- Net-Worker Rev. Barbara Harrison-Condon

THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

EDITOR: CYNTHIA WOOLEVER—WWW.THEPARISHPAPER.COM

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SMALL IS BIG AGAIN: RECLAIMING SMALL CHURCH MINISTRY

Although megachurches garner a great deal of attention, these supersized congregations comprise only a small fraction of all worshiping communities in the U.S. The current estimate is that only about 1,650 megachurches (worship attendance exceeds 2,000) dot the landscape out of a total 330,000 congregations across America. In fact, most churches are small: two out of three Protestant churches attract less than 100 worshipers in a typical week. Some scholars predicted that megachurches would essentially put small churches out of business. But the percentage of large churches as part of all churches is growing slowly while the number of small churches has remained stable. While the church's larger mission continues to be carried out by many small worshiping communities, small churches may get locked into self-criticism. However, more congregations are embracing the strengths associated with their small size. As one congregation proclaims: "We're not just any small church. We're the small church that's here!"¹

What Do Small Churches Need?

Lewis Parks, a champion of small congregations, claims that they can do big things with "a little cooperation with the Spirit on the part of those gathered, a little striving for excellence, a little freedom to express local religious creativity, and all things sprinkled with lots of hospitality"² A few other suggestions include the following:

A compelling story about their history, purpose, and mission. Members often possess a common narrative about when and why the church was established and some specifics of that particular historical period. But fewer members know the chapters in the church's history. For example, which pastors or lay leaders exerted a major influence in embracing new mission or overcoming risks? What community events (such as rapid population growth, departure of a major employer) affected the church in a major way? How do mem-

bers describe the current chapter in the church's narrative? Too often, the church's story that clearly reveals the congregation's ongoing ministry remains implicit. When members share greater awareness of the church's mission and history (how did we get here?), they gain greater clarity about the congregation's unique identity. Consider engaging members in an exercise that surfaces the church's history, experiences, traditions, and untested assumptions.³ Then, create a vision statement that captures these insights and use it on your website, with social media, and other church communications.

Intentional efforts to increase visibility. Effective approaches are size-specific. Every small church can creatively send the message to newcomers and the community—"we are here, we care about you, and we welcome you!" An electronic presence (website, Facebook, Instagram) establishes a virtual welcome mat. A well-maintained and lighted church building signals a physical "home" that anticipates visitors.



OUR OLDER DEMOGRAPHIC INTERPRETED
"AN ELECTRONIC PRESENCE TO INCREASE VISIBILITY"
AS STRINGING TWINKLE LIGHTS AROUND THE STEEPLE.

Participation by members and leaders in community events suggests commitment to the well-being of neighbors. Hosting community events, speakers, workshops, and the arts indicates that the church is a willing partner in promoting their neighbors' quality of life.⁴ Form a team of six members to test the congregation's visibility by instructing them to approach five people they do not know. Next, have these members inquire: "Have you ever heard of (the name of your church)? What do you know about it (for example, location, programs, etc.)?" Reconvene these volunteers and share the results. Based on what you learn, devise one or two new action steps to increase the congregation's community profile.

Customized methods for outreach. Context is everything when developing strategies to welcome newcomers. Would your community be described as active or sedentary, family- or career-focused, a stable or mobile population? A family-focused and stable community is more likely to respond to family and friend networks. If a population is career-focused and mobile, investments in electronic and social media will likely pay dividends. Have leaders discuss the key characteristics of the church's community five years ago, currently, five years from now, and ten years in the future.⁵ Refine the church's strategies based on these observed changes.

Purposeful efforts to pass along the faith to future generations. Following the words of Robert Schuller, congregations should view faith development as planting seeds: "Anyone can count the seeds in an apple, but only God can count the number of apples in a seed." Research shows that when congregations value nurturing faith in children and young adults, that emphasis and their hard work bears fruit. How does the church measure success in this ministry area?

Seed-planting congregations in this way also make ministry with millennials a priority. Parks makes a convincing argument that small churches are best suited for reaching out to this age group—adults born between 1981 and 1996.⁶ Millennials' life experiences differ greatly from previous generations and one in three are religiously unaffiliated.⁷ They were more likely to be raised in a nontraditional family and are more culturally diverse than past cohorts. Despite growing up in an online world, they place a high value on friendships and relationships. Small

churches offer them the unique opportunity for intimacy and caring relationships. They are looking for safe spaces for themselves and their children. Review the demographics within a fifteen-mile radius of the congregation to determine the age profiles of residents and to create updated strategies to reach unrepresented groups.

Accept reality and build on strengths. Garrison Keillor famously said: "I believe in looking reality straight in the eye and denying it." Small churches cannot afford to deny reality. Leaders can accept the things that cannot be changed while identifying the advantages that small size affords. Sometimes, cherished programs or even the church building have to be sacrificed in order for the congregation's future mission to thrive. Consider a four-session group study to discover new insights for small-church ministry.⁸

Making Small Big Again

Margaret Mead's statement inspired many in earlier generations: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." A parallel truth applies to congregations. Never doubt that small churches have changed the world and they will continue to do so.

1. Lewis A. Parks, "A New Way to View Small Church Vitality," Lewis Center for Church Leadership, October 14, 2015 (<https://www.churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/a-new-way-to-view-vitality-in-smaller-congregations/>).

2. Ibid.

3. Trey Hammond, "Timeline of Place," *Leader Guide for Places of Promise: Finding Strength in Your Congregation's Location*, 2008 (<http://www.uscongregations.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/leaderguide.pdf>).

4. Cynthia Woolever, "Keys to Growing a Small Church," *The Parish Paper*, August 2012 (Vol. 20, No. 8).

5. Statistics available by county, city, town, or zip code at U.S. Census (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

6. Parks.

7. Michael Lipka, "Millennials increasingly are driving growth of 'nones'" Pew Research Center, (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/12/millennials-increasingly-are-driving-growth-of-nones/>).

8. Use the free online resource from *The Parish Paper*, "Coaching Small Congregations toward Positive Change," <https://www.theparishpaper.com/sites/default/files/resources/Church%20Effectiveness%20Nuggets-%20Volume%202027.pdf>.