

CROSS Connection



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

December 2016

The Advent of God

God's Beloved People,

We have a full, five-week Advent this year thanks to the calendar, a full measure to get ready. As always the question is whether we will be ready for both the return of the Lord at the Last Day and the celebration of that First Day, the birth of Jesus of Nazareth.

We are familiar with the admonitions of the season: "Keep awake!" "The Kingdom of God has come near!" "The blind receive their sight; the lame walk the lepers are cleansed." "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid....Mary will bear a son."

How do you hear these admonitions this year? What kind of urgency do they carry given the world situation, our recent elections, and the unseasonably warm weather? What a strange year! Apocalyptic news and I find myself standing flat-footed, anything but ready! And yet the future looms.

Two figures offer guidance. The first is the prophet Jeremiah who, when he was about to be taken into captivity and shipped to exile in Babylon, bought land as a symbol of the future he couldn't see, but wanted to affirm. The second guide refers to this story in the midst of Hitler's reign of terror as his own way to step into a future he couldn't see. Here is Dietrich Bonhoeffer declaring Advent in the midst of his own confused day:

"We used to think that one of the inalienable rights of persons was that one should be able to plan both one's professional and private life. This is a thing of the past. The force of circumstances has brought us into a situation where we have to give up being 'anxious' about tomorrow (Matthew 6:34). But it makes all the difference whether we accept this willingly and in faith or under continual constraint. For most people the compulsory abandonment of planning for the future means that they are forced back into living just for the moment, irresponsibly, frivolously, or resignedly; some few dream longingly of better time to come and try to forget the present. We find both these courses equally impossible and there remains only the very narrow way, often extremely difficult to find, of living every day as if it were our last, yet living in faith and responsibility as though there were to be a great future. "Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land," proclaims the prophet (Jeremiah 32:15) in paradoxical contrast to the bleakness of his time. It is a sign from God and a pledge of a fresh start and a great future, just when all seems bleak."

Dear people of God: Let us enter this season vulnerable and in faith, certain that God is ushering in a future beginning with a vulnerable family bearing the Christ to us, Jesus, our anchor today and our anchor in the future. As he is always ahead of us, let us follow! Maranatha, Come, Lord Jesus!

Bp Martin Wells



Bridges not Walls

by *Pastor Helga Jansons* Director for Evangelical Mission

One of the best things about the ELCA Lutheran church is the way we build bridges across race, culture, people of different socioeconomic levels, sexual orientation, denominations and with other faiths. We have always taken seriously the way of Jesus - to love our neighbor - through relationships, conversation and action. I am proud that we can hold different theological views and be extensive in our biblical interpretation. Sometimes we have been named as the “grey church” because we understand complexity, and are not black and white. In our churches people have always been encouraged to ask questions, and sometimes to live the questions over time.

A big challenge now, in light of the presidential election, is to love people who take a different political view than ourselves. Can we bridge those gaping divides, or will we create our own walls between each other? As the church, I hope we can continue to have conversations with one another about God’s place in the world in spite of our political differences.

At Christmas time we worship our “down to earth” God who revealed himself as an infant in a manger, homeless from birth. Kelly Fryer in her book *Reclaiming the “L” Word* talks about our Lutheran understanding of God’s grace using the symbol of a downward arrow because “God always comes down”.

God bridged the gap between us by coming down to us as Jesus. Through Jesus we have an overpass; one who passes over our sins by dying on the cross.

How do we, as the body of Christ, build bridges instead of walls? How can we lead the way in this world and in our communities with people who are very different from us, and whose values and choices we do not share? I presume God still loves us all. Can we? And if so, how do we do that as the church when we will clearly disagree with decisions and leaders. Even within our family, let alone church families, there will be sharp disagreements. In order to love each other, do we go silent on anything political?

I suppose we will have to live the question. There is no single answer, and it is an ongoing challenge. If God continues to love us all in spite of our differences, then we are to try to love our neighbor just as Jesus said. Our capacity to love will be stretched, as Jesus arms were stretched out in love for us.

God came down to earth to show us how to live and how to love. He shared his theology, interpreted scripture, taught, healed, forgave, extended grace, and loved. He addressed hard questions and told stories.

It is an important time for us follow Jesus and live into his ways. The world needs our Lutheran way of building bridges, listening and valuing differences. As the church, we could be an example for others.

...I would like to beg you dear Sir, as well as I can, to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.

Rainer Maria Rilke, 1903
in Letters to a Young Poet



Presiding bishop

I was a stranger

By Elizabeth A. Eaton



I was a stranger and you welcomed me
(Matthew 25:35)

Today there are more than 60 million displaced people in the world, more than at any time since World War II.

From Syria, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Somalia, Afghanistan and Colombia, people are fleeing for their lives from war, famine, gang violence, crushing poverty, drought and floods. Parents make the wrenching choice to send their children away with the hope that the possibility of a better life in a new country outweighs the violence of their home countries and the perils of the journey.

It seems the whole world is on the move.

Migration has been part of the story of the people of God from the beginning. Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, and God sent Abram and Sarai from their homeland to a new land. Joseph's brothers and father were refugees in Egypt. Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years after God liberated them from oppression and infanticide. The people of God suffered bitter exile in Babylon after they were forced from Judah by war and ethnic cleansing.

The memory of migration, forced exile, of being the stranger stayed with the people of God through the centuries and became part of their confession of faith: "... you shall make this response before the Lord your God: 'A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien ...'" (Deuteronomy 26:5).

The experience of God's people compelled Israel to give special care to the stranger. "When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:33-34).

Jesus also experienced forced migration. We read in Matthew 2:13-15 that the holy family fled for their lives from Israel into Egypt. And during the years of his earthly ministry Jesus had no permanent home. "And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head'" (Matthew 8:20).

Our Lord not only commended us to welcome the stranger, Jesus made it clear that when we welcome the stranger we welcome him.

Lately in our country there is a lot of anxiety about migrants and strangers. They are too often portrayed as a threat. They are the others. They need to be monitored. They don't belong here. This is *our* home. This is *our* country. We belong here.


When we look at the world in this way it isn't possible to see that we, too, are on a journey; we, too, were once no people; we, too, are only passing through. The author of Hebrews recounting the history of salvation makes this clear when speaking about our ancestors in faith:

"All these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (Hebrews 11:13-16).

We don't have a continuing home on earth. We are all migrants. Let us welcome the stranger, seeing him or her as a fellow traveler, a companion on the way.

And here's a song for the road:

*I fear in the dark and the doubt of my journey;
but courage will come with the sound
of your steps by my side.*

*And with all of the family you saved by your love,
we'll sing to your dawn at the end of our journey*
(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 808). 

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

Byberg Preaching Workshop at Cannon Beach, Oregon!

January 16-18, 2017, Cannon Beach Conference Center

\$200 all-inclusive registration fee, registration deadline is December 31, 2016

Go to www.bybergpreaching.org for more information and to download the registration form to fill out and mail in (with your check)

Keynote speaker this year is Rev. Dr. David Lose, president of the Lutheran School of Theology at Philadelphia who will be offering four sessions about Preaching in a Postmodern, Post-Christian World. Pr. Lose writes, "We all know something has changed. Church - and preaching - seems somehow harder. Or maybe it's that we're not as sure the way we were taught to preaching works as well as it once did and wonder how we can change (or maybe even if we can change). Join us as we discuss the shifting cultural landscape and the challenges and opportunities of preaching in a culture that no longer assumes the Christian story and explore a variety of possibilities for preaching sermons that are as fitting to the world in which we live as they are faithful to the Gospel." Additionally, we'll have Bishop Dave Brauer-Rieke (Oregon Synod) and Rev. Linda Nou (member of ELCA Church Council) offering an open discussion on Monday evening about the current state and vision for ministry of the ELCA.

Our chaplains this year will be the Revs. Laurie and Paul Stummie-Diers of Bainbridge Island, Washington. For more information, please visit the website or contact Rev. Kimmy Meinecke at 509-466-3100 or 828-361-2505.

Friday and Saturday November 18-19

The "Estate Planning for the Heart" curriculum we've been hearing so much about at our last two Synod Assemblies will be making its public debut at Central Lutheran Church in Spokane for the EWALK (Eastern Washington) Network area. With module topics that include "Good, Better, Best: Funeral Decisions Made Simpler", "A Good Document Is A Done Document", and "Playing Cards And Talking Straight", the series of modules helps us address the issues related to end-of-life circumstances. It teaches us how to best prepare and then handle the various ways in which we might end up facing these difficult situations and the decisions they demand. Schedule will be a Friday noon through Saturday dinner. Registration will be available through Central's website. Watch the EWALK FB page, Central Lutheran's website (www.clspokane.org), and Synod email communication for more details as they become available.

Shoes Needed!

Mens and ladies shoes for our homeless and poverty stricken community.

Chaplain Holly is collecting shoes in good condition for those coming into the Emergency Department with no shoes.

For information please contact Chaplain Holly Gunby at hogun08@gmail.com with subject line: SHMC shoes.

December 15 – January 17th

The ELCA will be shutting down the Candidacy Portal and Mobility System

to implement updates related to the new Word and Service roster. No Candidacy forms including applications can be completed or submitted during this time. No Mobility forms (RLPs, MSPs, references, etc.) can be completed or submitted during this time. Edits cannot be submitted for RLPs until after January 17th.

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	AIM Associate in Ministry
NV New Vacancy	LP Lead Pastor	L Lay Position
TC Term call	SP Supply Pastor	TM Transition Minister (available for the open-ended call)
VP Visitation Pastor		

POS	LOCATION/CONGREGATION	STATUS	PASTORAL CARE	
P	Boise, ID – King of Glory	A	John Hergert	I
P	Chewelah, WA – St. Paul Lutheran	NV	Betty Krafft	SP
P	Davenport, WA - Zion	NV	Stacey Friedlein	TEEM
P	Firth, ID – Bethel Lutheran	A	Paul Malek	TEEM
P	Genesee, ID – Genesee/St. John	A	Dean Stewart	I
P	Lind, WA – Good Hope Lutheran	NV	Supply Pastors	
P	Mattawa, WA – Grace Lutheran	NV	Ginny Kreckling	I
P	Otis Orchards, WA – Peace Lutheran	NV	David Olson	TM
P	Pasco, WA – First Lutheran	A	Phylis Stromme	I
P	Spokane, WA – Bethlehem Lutheran	NV	Steve Wee	SP
P	Spokane, WA – Messiah Lutheran	NV	Cathy Harrison	SP
P	Spokane, WA – Prince of Peace	NV	Bob Chenault	I
AP	Spokane, WA – St. Luke Lutheran	B	Jim Johnson	LP
P	Spokane, WA – St. Mark's Lutheran	NV	Eric Dull Kate LePard	CP

Calls Accepted

Rev. Shelley Wee has accepted the call to Emmanuel Lutheran - Cheney, WA



MIDWINTER THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

*Desire and Deconstruction in Paul's
Letter to the Philippians*

with
Dr. David Fredrickson

January 30 – February 1, 2017

Izaak Walton Inn
Essex, Montana

CONTINUING EDUCATION HOURS: 11

SPONSORED BY:

***Northern Rockies
Institute of Theology,***
the continuing education ministry
of the Montana Synod, ELCA.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Ms. Jenny Kunka
Director, NRIT
(406) 452-1663
j.kunka@nrit.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 . . .*



for the family and friends of Lynda Williams, who passed away on November 11. She had been diagnosed with lung cancer and her hopes of starting treatment were not realized. She will be missed by many in the Moses Lake, WA community and beyond.

for newborn babies, their siblings, parents and grandparents.

for those nearing the end of their lives, and those living through it with them.

for those in treatment for illness, may they be restored to vitality.

for those discerning retirement, may the promise of the golden years come true.

for rostered leaders and congregations in call process.

for those involved with the process of electing our next Bishop.

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

Dear Churches and Musicians,

Here is the announcement you've been waiting for:

Our combined Lutheran Advent/Christmas Concert this year will be Friday, December 9th, at the Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 7:00 PM, 640 N. Columbia Center Blvd. Kennewick (parking lot and entrances are on Colorado St, off Grandridge)

Please Save the Date: Friday, December 9, 2016, 7:00pm.

For 12 years, Susan Miller and her team of volunteers have produced wonderful Lutheran Advent/Christmas concerts, which we have all enjoyed participating in, or attending. Now Susan has passed the baton in asking us to organize this year's concert. It is making sense to us, that we can organize it in our own church, but it is rather daunting the first time, so keep us in your prayers!

Kathy Bernard, our organist, will be your contact person. Our Men of Life choir director, David Baldwin, will direct the massed choir piece.

Please send any new contact information, and corrections. I am preparing to send, via email, the list of things for the musicians to return to me with preliminary information for the program, plus information on the massed choir piece, concert logistics, etc. We have 10 weeks till Advent - we can still do it!

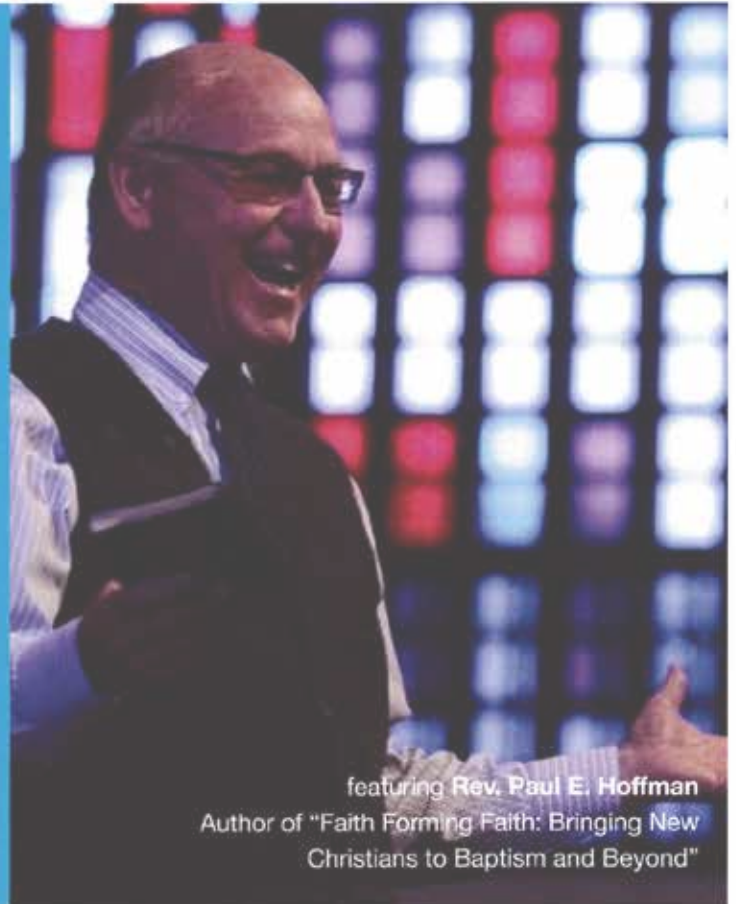
Thank you!

Kathy Bernard, skbrnd62@gmail.com or 509-586-3037
(please leave a message or text if I don't pick up)
Lord of Life Lutheran, 509-783-5222

Faith Forming Faith: Catechumenal Training

April 28-30th, 2017

Grace Lutheran Church
1408 Washington St, Wenatchee, WA 98801
www.FaithFormingFaith.weebly.com



The **catechumenate**— a process of faith formation and discipling that began in the early centuries of the Christian Church— has been reclaimed in the twentieth century, primarily as a result of the work of the Roman Catholic Church in the development of the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults. During the past two decades, non-catholic Christian churches have slowly begun to understand the catechumenate as a process of faith formation and spiritual development for twenty-first century people who have little or no previous association with the Christian faith.

The catechumenate is also being adapted in congregations for renewal in the processes of the Baptism of infants and children, in confirmation ministry, and in the affirmation of Baptism or the reaffirmation of the Baptismal covenant by the already baptized.

Grace Lutheran in Wenatchee, Washington and Pastor Paul Hoffman (author, “Faith Forming Faith”) invite you to join them for this “Faith Forming Faith” Catechumenal Training Event in Wenatchee, WA. This weekend event is open to ministry teams, church groups, pastors, congregational leaders, and anybody interested in learning about the catechumenal faith formation and discipling process!

“Faith Forming Faith” will be held at Grace Lutheran Church from April 28-30th. The cost is \$175/person, or for a group of 3 or more from the same congregation, the cost is \$150/person.

More information— including registration information— can be found at: www.FaithFormingFaith.weebly.com, or you can contact Pastor James Aalgaard at jaalgaard@nwi.net

**EASTERN
WASHINGTON
IDAHO SYNOD**

of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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**December 2016
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

November 2016

- 14 Synod assembly Meeting at Advent Lutheran
- 14-17 First Call Theological Education
- 18-19 Estate Planning for the Heart at Central - Spokane
- 22 Rural Ministries Resources at All Saints - Spokane
- 24-25 Synod Office Closed
- 24 Thanksgiving

December 2016

- 10 Region 1 Officers Meeting
- 14 Synod assembly Meeting at Advent Lutheran
- 19-30 Synod Office Closed
- 25 Celebration of Jesus' Birth

January 2017

- 1-6 Synod Office Closed
- 17 Bishop Nomination Deadline
- 27-28 Synod Council - Spokane
- 29 Faith Action Network Annual Forum



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 Phylis Stromme
- Net-Worker The Rev. David Kappus
- Net-Worker Kristin Koskella

THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

EDITOR: CYNTHIA WOOLEVER—WWW.THEPARISHPAPER.COM

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CAN WE WAIT FOR GOD'S SPARK?

God sparks innovations, but only on God's terms, and those terms usually involve disruption. From burning bushes to wood that burns even when soaked, God's sparks manifest themselves in unusual ways. We can choose to ignore the spark or even squelch the spark. But, if we take notice of it, the spark soon becomes a roaring fire. What are the conditions for God's spark? And, does the spark look different if people rather than God initiate the encounter?

How Business Views Disruption

The average life of a shopping mall or center built today is fifteen years. And if the shopping venue does not make a radical change at least half-way through their expected fifteen-year tenure, it may not even last that long! Geoff Colvin recently wrote that the most innovative companies today, "see their business as disrupters would see it." They never stop self-disrupting their own companies.¹ For example, Amazon disrupted bookstores twenty years ago with their online selling model. Then disrupted itself with Kindle e-readers, replacing its own books-by-mail model.² They have continued this disruption by opening and successfully operating brick-and-mortar bookstores, even while the traditional bookstore model continues to fail.³

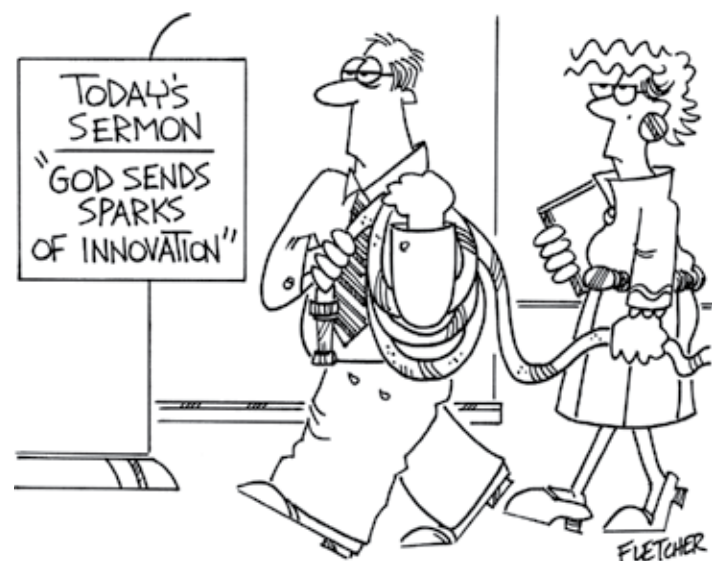
Fortunately, congregations do not have to self-disrupt. God is here to do that for us! Sometimes congregations forget how often they have had to respond to disruptions in order to faithfully minister in their present location. A church that has existed for one hundred years has probably had six or seven make-overs resulting from neighborhood swivels and societal swings. Congregations are indeed resilient. But, God must sponsor their transformations.

For instance, through a discernment process, a Milwaukee congregation challenges its members to draw from three equal sources whenever the church

launches a new ministry. Equal shares of the start-up cost must come from: (1) those launching the ministry; (2) other congregational members; and (3) nonmembers or community partners. Asking nonmembers to support new ministry ideas can be disruptive and involving community stakeholders can make the ministry launch much more messy and problematic. However, this church believes the community's involvement confirms that this is the direction in which God has encouraged them to go and have accepted the disruption proposed by God.

God's Disruptive Spark in the Bible

Sparks from God are indications that God has heard us or wants to reveal something to us. What happens when God initiates the contact? The book of Matthew reminds us that God's initiative contact is usually disruptive. God's encounter with the mother of Jesus was certainly disruptive. When God visited the shepherds and asked them to go to King Herod to inquire about a new king, that news was not received warmly by



the current king. Jesus rocks John the Baptist's world by asking John to baptize Jesus and presenting standards for an utterly new lifestyle in the Sermon on the Mount. The disruptions continue and become more personal as Jesus eats at a sinner's home and shatters Sabbath protocols. Walking with Jesus means living a constantly unsettled life.

Can We Seek God's Spark?

The book of Matthew also reveals instances in which humans initiate contact with God, and we quickly discover the importance of faith in such encounters. When Jesus calmed the storm, he asked his disciples, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" (Matthew 8:26). However, when a man brought his daughter to Jesus for healing, the man openly expressed his faith, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live" (Matthew 9:18). Likewise, when two blind men came to Jesus, he asked, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" (Matthew 9:28).

No matter who initiates the contact, it is clear that God must sponsor the change in order for the spark to grow into a fire. We see this communication breakdown with God in a community where the owner of a local diner purposely hires and trains former prison inmates and other persons who have difficulty finding work. When the owner was asked if he had contacted local clergy to invite them to be part of his community ministry, his response was surprising. "Yes," he said, "And it was a disaster. The clergy kept asking the employees uncomfortable questions about their background. They made it clear that they would want them to attend their congregations if they helped." The clergy wanted to be a part of the spark, but could not handle the flame.

What if today's burning bushes are far away from the Sunday morning crowds? What if God is sending us sparks of innovation on a regular basis, but they are more dangerous and disruptive than they are comforting and successful by our standards? A congregation in Nebraska recently witnessed God's spark by walking their neighborhood. Some nearby apartment dwellers became concerned about these strangers who were regularly walking their neighborhood and asked what they were doing. The neighborhood inquirers were quite surprised to

learn that church members were simply trying to better understand their neighborhood and the people in it.

As it turned out, the apartment residents welcomed their intruders, as they had spiritual questions that they were too intimidated to ask anyone else. The entire group explored these spiritual questions together. The people in the apartments have not come to the church but the church members have learned as much about God as the apartment residents. God's spark is being fanned, but not in ways that we could predict.

Perhaps many of our requests for sparks from God are seemingly ignored because we are seeking a specific outcome, such as congregational growth, our own comfort and safety, or retaining our leadership status. Congregational change does not happen unless God sparks it, and not only must we have enough faith to oxygenate the spark once it appears, but we must also be prepared to accept God's end result.

Are You Ready for Congregational Change?

"A small green apple cannot ripen one night by tightening all its muscles, squinting its eyes and tightening its jaw in order to find itself the next morning miraculously large, red, ripe, and juicy beside its small green counterparts. . . . We must wait for God."⁴

Look for God's pre-emptive spark and once you find it, block it from distractions, and fan it with flames of trust.

1. *Fortune*, August 1, 2016, 22.

2. *Ibid*.

3. Ryan Bort, "Amazon Is Opening More Brick-and-Mortar Bookstores," www.newsweek.com/amazon-opening-brick-and-mortar-bookstores-494216.

4. James Finley, *Merton's Palace of Nowhere* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2003), 114.