

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.

From the Bishop

January 2016

God's Beloved People,

One of the favorite books Susan and I have collected through the years is "The Martin Luther Christmas Book," (Fortress, 1948), a series of translations of Martin Luther arranged by Roland Bainton. Bainton takes us through the Annunciation, The Visitation, and the Nativity of Jesus, all the way to the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.

Luther, as always, is remarkably contemporary, and so we listen in to Luther, by way of Bainton, on the visit of the Wise Men, p. 63. Here he speaks of the faith of the wise men, the reality of Jesus' birth, and those among us today who flee persecution as refugees:

Though they saw but a tumbled down shack and a poor young mother with a poor little babe, not like a king at all, meaner than one of their own servants, they did not shrink, but in great, strong faith cast out all misgivings of common sense, and, following simply the word of the prophet and the witness of the star, they accepted him for a king, fell on their knees, worshiped him, and presented their treasures. The world would not have done so, but according to her wont would have looked for a velvet cushion and a host of servants and maids. The world makes presents to those who already have enough, and, to provide them, snatches the bread from the mouths of the hungry who have nothing but what they earn with their bloody sweat.

If we Christians would join the Wise Men, we must close our eyes to all that glitters before the world and look rather on the despised and foolish things, help the poor, comfort the despised, and aid the neighbor in his need. Do not boast that you have built churches and

endowed masses. God will say: "What to me are your churches and masses? What do I care about your altars and your bells? Do I take pleasure in stone and wood? ... I have set before you spiritual temples. These you should build, feed, and help, but you have gone about doing foolish things...."

Let us then observe how these Wise Men took no offense at the mean estate of the Babe and his parents, that we also may not be offended in the mean estate of our neighbor, but rather see Christ in him, since the Kingdom of God is to be found among the lowly and the despised in persecution, misery, and the holy cross. Those who seek Christ anywhere else find him not.

...

He was not only born poor and needy but also, on account of Herod, had at once to flee the country. On the journey into Egypt the presents of the Wise men must have come in very handy. So in our day we should not forget those who are suffering persecution.

Ah Luther, the rascal! Reform us he will!

God's richest blessings for the New Year of our Lord!

Bishop Martin Wells



Vitality Check-Up

by Pastor Helga Jansons Director for Evangelical Mission

Most of us have an Annual Physical to see if we are healthy. We may think we are doing fine but our test results may reveal otherwise. We cannot know our cholesterol levels until the test results tell us. Once we know how we are doing, we can find out how to increase our vitality.

The Vitality Project in the ELCA has developed a way to measure the vitality of a congregation. It focuses on causes, not the symptoms of the lack of vitality. “Frustrated by traditional measures of butts and bucks, in 2009, Linda Bobbitt in consultation with the ELCA Research and Evaluation department began work to develop a simple, statistically reliable and valid survey that looks at the outcomes of ministry in terms of how it connects with God, each other and the world. The project continues by working to understand what factors contribute to or distract from vitality and how those factors might be intentionally addressed to improve vitality... It adds tremendously to the diagnosis and measures progress in ways the former measures cannot.”

Tools to check your congregation’s vitality are available on: www.congregationalvitalitysurvey.com

Once you click on this link you will find a **vitality survey online** for your entire congregation take using the Congregational ID # and the password provided to complete the annual report. The results will be sent back to your congregation.

When using the Resources tab you will find the **Quick-Check** to see how your congregation balances vitality and sustainability. The first page includes congregational life questions and the second page asks you to rate sustainability and then consider the relationship between sustainability and vitality. (A copy is included in this Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod Newsletter.)

Also under Resources is a longer and more thorough **Check-up** with a workbook. It has fabulous information and a way to check vitality, life stage, strengths and barriers. It helps to identify where to focus your congregation’s energy.

On the Resources page is a **Parochial Report Discussion Guide**. This is because the 2016 ELCA annual Parochial Report will include the congregational vitality measurements. This discussion guide is designed to help congregations talk about the new vitality items on Parochial Report. Leaders should complete the worksheet independently before discussing their answers with a group.

Also worthwhile is to read the articles on the Shared Learning tab. I commend to you the one called **Vitality & Clergy Competencies**.

The key to congregational vitality is that people experience God’s active presence in everyday life and they live as disciples of Christ.

It is a new year. It is a good time to have a check-up and to set goals for the year so as to develop focus and direction, and thereby increase the health and vitality of your congregation. Parochial Reports are a way to assess your current status and your vitality. Research and Evaluation of the ELCA is a resource for you and can keep track of information about your congregation over time.



CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY PROJECT



Quick-Check

All congregations want to thrive. A congregation (or any organization) is thriving when it achieves missional goals (vitality) and is likely to continue doing so into the future (sustainability). This checklist helps you quickly see how you rate your congregations' vitality and sustainability.

Vitality

A vital congregation is one that lives out God's mission through strong relationships with God, each other and the world. The following questions can help your congregation determine its current vitality

	Poorly or		Somewhat		Great or	
How well do these phrases describe your congregation?	1	2	3	4	5	Copy number from column
<i>Example</i>			X			3
Worship nurtures people's faith						
Deepens people's relationship with God						
A clear sense mission						
Excitement about the congregation's future						
Always ready to try something new						
A positive force in the community						
Works for social justice/advocacy						
How well does your congregation...	Hardly at all		Well		Very Well	
Incorporate new members into congregational life						
Seek out and use the gifts of members of all ages						
Build strong, healthy relationships among members						
Manage disagreements in a healthy respectful manner						
Address social concerns (helping those in need)						
Equip members to share their faith with others						
Interact with the local community						
Help members live out their faith in daily lives						
Total all rows						
Vitality Score: (Divide total by 15)						

Sustainability

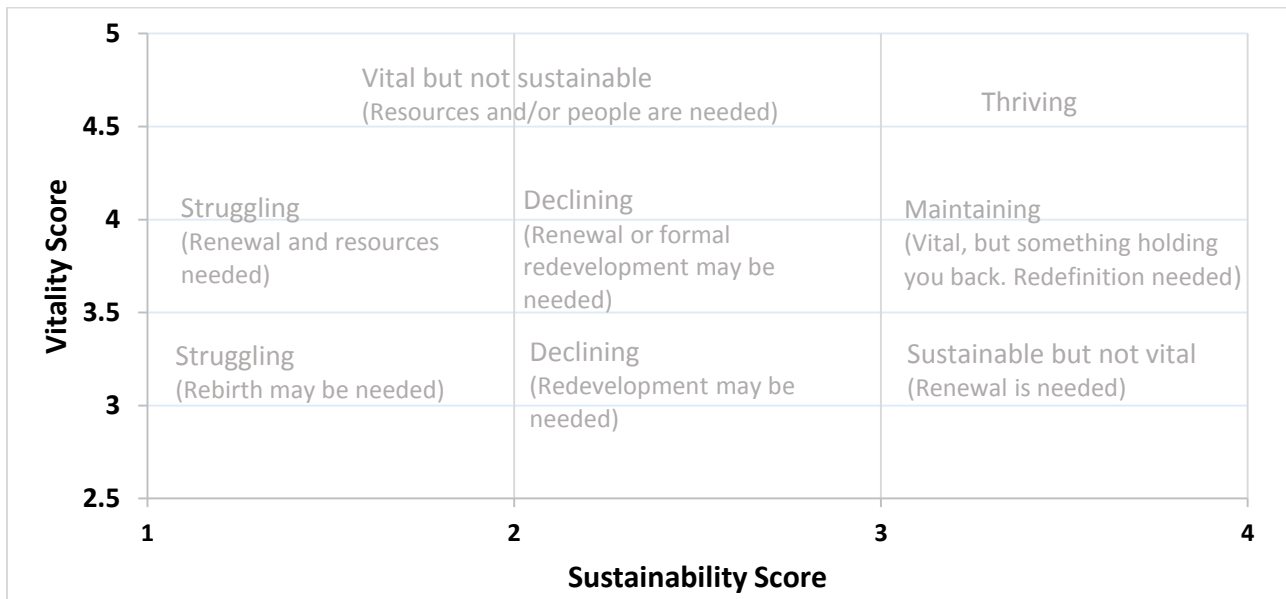
Congregations need resources to sustain ministry. The two primary resources include money (to pay staff, fund ministries and maintain facilities) and people power (to engage in ministries). Use the following questions to estimate your sustainability.

	Declined to not sustainable	Declining but still sustainable	Maintaining	Growing or Increasing	Copy number
Do you have what you need to maintain or expand ministry?	1	2	3	4	
People Power Enough people with energy to lead and participate in worship & ministries					
Financial Resources To pay for facility, staffing, ministries, etc.					
Sustainability Score : (Write the lowest number here)					

Since both people and financial resources are necessary for sustainability, the lower number represents the “weakest link” in your congregation’s sustainability chain.

Balancing Vitality and Sustainability

Use the following chart to mark where your congregation falls in the matrix. Find your sustainability at the bottom and draw a line up. Find your vitality score from the first page and draw a line to the right. Look at where the two lines cross. This intersection **estimates** your congregation’s most likely vitality/sustainability balance. This is not a perfect measure because these categories overlap some in real life. **Talk about how this estimate fits or doesn’t fit with your experience and why.**



A congregation needs to be both vital and sustainable in order to be thriving. Vital congregations that aren’t sustainable can’t continue God’s mission in their setting. Sustainable congregations that are not vital may have lost touch with God’s mission for them in this time and place. **What are your congregation’s strengths and challenges? What is God calling your congregation toward now?**

Now What?

Visit www.congregationalvitalitysurvey.com to have your entire congregation take this survey online. Talk with your synod’s Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM) to learn more about vitality and to take a longer congregation-wide survey.

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 – Immanuel Lutheran	C	Kimberly Meinecke	I
P	Boise, ID – King of Glory	A	Kristi Bummer	I
P	Boise, ID – Shepherd of the Valley	A	Joel Westby	I
P	Chewelah, WA – St. Paul Lutheran	NV	Betty Krafft	SP
P	Firth, ID – Bethel Lutheran	A	Paul Malek	TEEM
P	Gifford, ID – Good Hope Lutheran	A		
P	Kennewick, WA – Lord of Life	A	Ron Shipman	I
P	Mattawa, WA – Grace Lutheran	NV	Ginny Kreckling	I
P	Othello, WA – Pilgrim Lutheran	A	Steve Myers	I
P	Pasco, WA – First Lutheran	A	Phylis Stromme	I
P	Spokane, WA – Bethlehem Lutheran	NV	Steve Wee	SP
TM	Toppenish, WA – Faith Lutheran	A	Jillian Ross	TM
P	Yakima, WA – Central Lutheran	A	Joel Martyn- A/P	Dean Stewart I

SAVE THE DATE for ASSEMBLY 2016

2016 Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod Assembly
Riverside Hotel - Boise - April 15-17, 2016

Churchwide Representative
Christina Jackson-Skelton

WE ARE THE LORD'S: Our Journey With Christ

*For if we live, we live to the Lord,
and if we die, we die to the Lord.
So then, whether we live
or whether we die, we are the Lord's.*



**It's time to elect
your Synod Assembly
Representatives for 2016!**

Join us as we gather to conduct business of the Synod, share in worship and explore Romans 14:7-8 in dynamic workshops, plenary sessions and programs. This year's Assembly will also feature the work of the Synod End of Life Task Force.

Initial registration packets will be available after January 15 - Registration Deadline is March 1

Presiding bishop

By Elizabeth A. Eaton

The unsettled season of Advent

In incarnate Christ, God finds us and gives restless hearts rest



MICHAEL D. WATSON

O come, O come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 257).

Advent. We were just here it seems. It's a season of preparation and anticipation. It can become exhausting and relentless. The commercial run-up to Christmas has certainly gotten longer. Sometime

right after Labor Day the holiday displays appear in stores, ads pop up on our laptops and hand-held electronic devices, and carols creep into Muzak. And the annual holiday worship war between pastors and people will be waged over whether to sing Christmas carols in church during Advent. I will not weigh in on that epic debate in this column.

Instead, I want us to consider the deep and holy longing that is part of this season. It is significant that the words of the prophets and the yearning of Israel in exile are so prominent in the lessons appointed for Advent. The people longed for the Lord to come, to act, to redeem them, to take them home. Their exile in Babylon was no longer harsh. Many had made good lives, raised children and settled in. But it wasn't quite right. They were physically present in Babylon, but their hearts were not there.

I think Advent is that way for us. The earth is God's good creation. We find much joy in this life. As Lutherans we do not withdraw from the world but engage it, believing that it is a gift. But we also know that it is not quite right. That there is brokenness and pain—the pain we experience, the pain others cause, the pain we cause others. And, because of our brokenness, we turn in on ourselves trying, in futile self-sufficiency, to make ourselves whole.

In some ways Advent creates a certain restlessness. It may be one of the few seasons of the year when we become more aware of our longing for wholeness and more alert to the signs that something is approaching. It's like hearing a sound

in the distance that heralds something, but we just can't quite make it out. I believe Advent is a liminal time, a threshold. The Celts called this a "thin place," a place and time where heaven and earth seem to touch. It's just there, just out of sight, just out of reach. And we are filled with a holy longing. Isaiah said it: "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down ..." (Isaiah 64:1).

What is it about us that makes us care, that makes us restless? Isaiah also wrote: "Yet, O Lord, you are our Father, we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand" (Isaiah 64:8). It seems that this Advent longing is an awareness that apart from God we are not whole. In Advent we find ourselves in the unsettled and restless time between the ending of the old year and the beginning of the new, a thin place where we draw near to God realizing, as Augustine wrote, "You have formed us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you" (Confessions).

But we can't get there by ourselves. This is not our work, but God's. Trustful waiting for the Lord is the purpose of Advent: waiting, yearning, expecting, believing.

Trustful waiting for the Lord is the purpose of Advent: waiting, yearning, expecting, believing.

And God is faithful. We hear from the prophet Zephaniah that God promises: "At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you ..." (Zephaniah 3:20).

But the One for whom we wait is not content merely to draw us in, but fulfills this promise by coming to us as Emmanuel, God with us. In the incarnate Christ, God comes to us, finds us and gives our restless hearts rest.

A friend of mine said, "The world is longing for a deeper sense of spiritual connection, but we haven't figured out how to meet the world in that conversation and longing. How can Advent be the start of that new conversation? How different would Advent look if we could start to think of that deep longing as part of our Advent journey?"

Being unsettled in this season might be good for us. God will not disappoint. □

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel (ELW, 257).

Synod Mission Support Update

November Income	YTD Income	YTD Expense	Net
\$67,969.14	\$617,062.65	\$661,131.18	< \$44,068.53 >

Idaho Discipleship Conference

February 19-21, 2016

Nampa Civic Center



David Lose



Susan Briehl



Marty Haugen



Tony Campolo

Claimed Gathered Sent

Registration is now open and limited to the first 1000. Promotion is going out across the Northwest so register now to ensure your spot. idahodiscipleship.blogspot.com



**Join us on
Facebook!**

[https://www.facebook.com
/Eastern
WashingtonIdahoSynodELCA](https://www.facebook.com/EasternWashingtonIdahoSynodELCA)

Luther & Bach Study Tour Through Germany July 12-22, 2016

One year before the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, Pastor Jim Johnson and Dr. Richard Strauch will be leading an 11 day trip to Germany for an educational pilgrimage focused on Martin Luther and Johann Sebastian Bach. Dr. Strauch, Professor of music history and Director of the Wind Symphony at Whitworth University, has lead several college groups to Germany and has done a great deal of study on Bach. Pastor Johnson, who pastors St Luke Lutheran Church in Spokane, traveled through Germany during his sabbatical in 2008 and has done extensive studies on Luther's writings and Reformation history.

The pilgrimage will begin with travel to Berlin. We will have approximately two days of site seeing in Berlin. We will visit Potsdam, Leipzig, Wittenberg, Erfurt, Eisenach, Augsburg - where Luther and Bach lived and worked. We will attend a Bach recital at the St Thomas Lutheran Church in Leipzig where Bach himself played organ most of his career, and hear the inspiring first hand account of the peace and prayer revolution movement that took place in Leipzig out of the St Nicholai Lutheran Church in Leipzig, which led to the Wall coming down in Berlin. We will also visit Rothenburg, Neuschwanstein Castle, the Concentration Camp at Dachau, then ending in Munich. While some of these places aren't germane to Luther or Bach, we are including sites that are important to German history and culture that will be highlights for a once-in-a-lifetime visit.

We currently have 30 participants attending and have room to take up to 44 people on this trip. Included in the price of the trip will be airfare, lodging, most meals, bus travel, entrance fees and gratuities. For more information please contact Pastor Jim Johnson at St Luke Lutheran Church by calling 509-467-5256, or by email at jjohnsonslc@gmail.com.

What makes this a pilgrimage and more than just a site seeing tour? The opportunity to travel, eat, pray, study, worship, and fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ as we explore our rich heritage and become inspired by two of the great witnesses of the faith: Luther and Bach.

Save the date and sign up now for an experience of a lifetime!



Northwest Washington Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 God's work. Our hands.

Ministry Friends,
 Please share this opportunity with your colleagues as appropriate. Thanks!

Interim Ministry Network (IMN) Workshop

The IMN will be conducting a 3-day training entitled, "Fundamentals of Transitional Ministry - the Work of the Leader", at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Bellevue, WA., Wednesday - Friday, February 3 - 5, 2016.

This training is for pastors thinking of interim/transitional ministry, as well as pastors presently serving in interim ministry. This is the first of the 3 step process that the IMN offers that enables pastors to be recognized as trained intentional interim pastors. The instructor is Pastor Tim Wolbrecht.

The training includes a section on discernment for those unsure if interim ministry is for them. Contact the IMN@imnedu.org for registration.

The IMN does offer scholarships to their training events. Contact Ellen Goudy, Education & Membership Manager at Ellen@imnedu.org, or 410.719.1770 if you have questions about the event, or a scholarship.

January 16, 2016

St. Mark's Lutheran - Spokane, WA

9:00 - 3:00

*Save
the Date*

“Tell Your Story, Live Your Story”

“Tell Your Story, Live Your Story”, is a leadership workshop for congregational councils, ministry teams, and pastors. Keynote speakers are Dr. Joe Albert, Gonzaga University (the “tell your story” part) and Bishop Martin Wells (the “live your story” part). Workshops for congregational presidents/vice presidents, treasurers, and team leaders will be available as well as general church management and planning topics. Registration is \$50 (lunch included) per congregation for unlimited attendees. Watch for registration info coming soon!

For more information, contact Central Lutheran Church - Spokane, WA
509-624-9233 or office@clspokane.org

A Reason to Celebrate!

In 2012, youth across the ELCA set out to raise \$250,000 to support the water projects of ELCA World Hunger where needed most – and they did it! To date, more than \$500,000 has been received and thanks to a generous family, \$500,000 will be matched – totaling more than \$1 million in gifts for ELCA World Hunger-supported water projects.

The global water crisis doesn't often make headlines, but the truth is that it claims more lives per year than war or natural disasters. Here are the facts: Nearly a billion people – that's one out of seven people in our world today – lack access to safe drinking water. Today, 2.5 billion people, including almost one billion children, live without even basic sanitation. Every 20 seconds, a child dies as a result of poor sanitation. That's 1.5 million preventable deaths each year. Water-related illnesses result in a loss of 443 million days of school attendance for children, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Millions of women spend several hours a day collecting water, limiting their social and economic potential.

Water projects supported by your gifts to ELCA World Hunger include:

- Safe water systems, like wells, spring boxes and boreholes
- Health, hygiene and sanitation programs
- Agricultural irrigation systems

Your gifts are making a difference! Your support is helping create healthier families and stronger economies through projects that provide clean drinking water through spring boxes and boreholes, support for irrigation systems, education about sanitation in rural villages, and so much more. Some of these projects even take place in rural areas of the United States where people do not have running water. Thank you for improving the lives of so many!

While we celebrate meeting our goal, our work is far from over. Continue the momentum of the Walk for Water challenge with special resources, educational opportunities, and fundraising events that will help our friends around the world break the cycle of hunger and poverty. Resources are available at elca.org. Click on “resources” and then search resources for “walk for water.”

Join Us as We Pray. . .

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



for Rev. John LaMunyon (Sammamish Hills Lutheran) and his family following the death of his mom, Shirley (LaMunyon) Clark who died at the Willamette Lutheran Home in Keizer, Oregon. Shirley was the spouse of Wes LaMunyon, and mother of sons, Jim and John LaMunyon. Wes served parishes in Boise, Eugene, and Spokane.

for Carl and Ruthann Jensen, as Carl recovers from a fall and pneumonia.

for Rev. Ruben Duran and his family as his beloved sister Ruth Duran has just died. Ruben's wife, Rev. Jean Duran, Ruben and the Duran family have been taking care of Ruth in their home during these last years. She had just celebrated the miracle of 20 years of life after her liver transplant. Ruth Duran served in the Metropolitan Chicago Synod as an Associate In Ministry.

for congregations and pastors in call process.

for those in transition, may they find stability.

for those who suffer loss, may they find hope.

for those facing the struggles of aging, may they find the joy of youth.

for those trying to make the world a better place, may their work be fruitful, and appreciated.

for retiring pastors, may their body of work be appreciated, and their retirement be filled with purpose.

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.

TheoProbe 2016

Winter Park, CO - February 21-26, 2016

THEME

Vocation was a key concept to emerge from the Protestant Reformation. TheoProbe 2016 will look at how Martin Luther and other reformers understood vocation and then show how it can enliven parish ministry today. Participants will come away with a renewed sense of their own calling as well as ideas for how to make vocation central in their own faith communities.

PRESENTERS

Dr. Rollie Martinson, now retired, was a professor and academic dean at Luther Seminary in St. Paul. Dr. Mark Tranvik is a professor of religion at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. Both are ordained pastors with significant parish experience.

For more information, contact Pastors Dave Haven, Phil Misner, or Misael Fajardo-Perez.

**EASTERN
WASHINGTON
IDAHO SYNOD**

of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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



January 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

December 2015

20 Rev. Gail Duba Installation at Zion Lutheran -
Spokane Valley, WA

24-25 Synod Office Closed - Christmas

30-31 Synod Office closed - Happy New Year

January 2016

9 Ventures Workshop - Treasure Valley

9 Mission Interpreter Training - Boise

11-13 Byberg Preaching Workshop
Cannon Beach, OR

14 Rural Ministry Meeting - Potlach, ID

16 Leadership Training Event
St. Mark's - Spokane, WA

18 Synod Office Closed Martin Luther King Day

22-23 Synod Council - Spokane, WA

30 Faith Action Network Conference - St. Mark's Spo.



Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our Hands

Staff

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THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

EDITOR: CYNTHIA WOOLEVER—WWW.THEPARISHPAPER.COM

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HOW MINISTRY TEAMS GET THINGS DONE

The pastor charged with recruiting teachers for the congregation's Sunday school classes expressed her frustration: "Every year it gets harder and I don't see that changing! I've tried every strategy and reached out to new people over and over again. At least I know one thing—what I'm doing isn't working." But one thing this leader and many others have not yet tried is a ministry team approach.

The biggest myth about mobilizing teams is that they can be created by gathering a few people together and naming them a team.¹ Leaders often wonder: Can a church add ministry teams without revising their present structure or bylaws? Yes! Churches that transition to a team-driven methodology add teams while reducing the number and size of their traditional committees. Although the church neither renames nor disbands all of its committees, those groups may meet less frequently.

Unleashing the Power of Teams

Each ministry team is comprised of church members and worshipers who have not yet joined the church. Unlike committee appointments, ministry-team coordinators recruit for their teams throughout the year.² Anyone can be invited at any time to join a team. Being part of a ministry team offers in-service learning and a sense of belonging for congregational newcomers. Further, the governing board and committees do not assume micro-management control of ministry teams. Rather, they hold ministry teams accountable to their church's core values, beliefs, vision, and mission.

Ministry-focused vs. constituency-focused. Traditional, constituency-focused committees tend to be assigned tasks. Each member senses a responsibility to represent the constituency that appointed him or her. When churches establish committees (typically on an annual basis), members are elected or appointed to reflect the diverse views of the congregation. Thus, committee members relate to the leaders or group who gave them their charge and to those they represent. In contrast, ministry-focused teams seek

out individuals with the skills and talents needed to make the team work effectively. As a result, team members relate to each other and look for ways to best use their gifts to make a difference. In this way, the enthusiasm generated for ministry glues the team together.

Shared leadership vs. designated chairperson. In teams, the leadership function is shared by team members. In the most high-functioning teams, every member considers him- or herself to be a leader. A consensus model of decision making works well because members feel free to act on their own sense of things. Whereas in a committee, individuals may feel the pull to represent the interests of a constituent group. Because the committee chairperson receives authorization from the church's governing board, he or she assumes responsibility for communicating the committee's decisions back to the board. In effect, an expansion of team ministry decentralizes congregational control.

Motivating people vs. maintaining control. Teams unleash the three factors that motivate people—autonomy,



THE ONE DISADVANTAGE OF ADOPTING
A MINISTRY TEAM APPROACH IN YOUR CHURCH.

mastery, and purpose. Delegating leaders, in the traditional committee model, give subordinates responsibility for decision making and problem solving. While delegation works in situations where people draw paychecks for their work rather than intrinsic rewards, Daniel Pink asserts in his book *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us* that workers gain autonomy when they own independence over “their task, their time, their technique, and their team.”³ Thus, ministry teams help satisfy the innate human need to be needed, help others, make a difference, share their God-given gifts, master skills and learn new ones, enhance self-esteem, and gain a sense of belonging and acceptance.

Setting up a Team to Succeed

Creating an effective team requires intentionality and accountability. First, the team’s purpose must be clearly defined by the group. For example, if a team achieves its purpose, what will be the result or impact? What will be different because of the team’s work? Teams can get distracted and over time expand their task list. Teams that state their purpose in writing and have continuing conversations about their focus tend to avoid wandering away from their original assignment.

Second, what type of team is needed? Understanding the distinct work of three types of teams enhances the probability that members with the right gifts will be recruited.

- *Decision-making teams* take on big-picture issues like making choices about a congregation’s vision, identifying the goals that move the church toward its next chapter in ministry, or outlining strategies for building financial stability. Strategic planning or visioning teams are good examples of this type of teamwork that eventually is taken under consideration by the entire congregation.
- *Task-accomplishing teams* undertake specific assignments important to the church’s mission. For example, a task team may take on the responsibility of providing a free breakfast to community residents each weekday in the church’s fellowship hall. Task teams are evaluated by how well they carry out their assignments.
- *Self-directed teams* assume a great deal of autonomy to accomplish their goals. For example, church leaders know they need to review their policies with regard to the use of church facilities by community groups. A team is formed to con-

duct the review, gather information, and make recommendations about rental policies and fees.

Third, how many people make up a good team? Research indicates that five to seven individuals is about the right size. For instance, Amazon.com, which operates with teams, suggests that team size is optimal when “two pizzas” can feed the team. Team size operates independently of the size of the congregation. Even large congregations need to exercise discipline to keep teams in the two-pizza range.

Fourth, effective teams pay attention to the small issues. The following specific behaviors undermine a team when members fail to

- show up or arrive on time for meetings
- respond to emails, texts, or other communications in a timely way
- demonstrate commitment to the work or complete assignments on time
- share resources and credit for work well done.⁴

Finally, few teams operate effectively in a congregation struggling with dysfunction. A dysfunctional congregation is characterized by an absence of trust. Congregational leaders must earn trust and work to create trust within the congregation as whole.

“Every Member in Ministry”

One congregation that uses the ministry team model adopted “every member in ministry” as their motto. By involving a high percentage of members in team ministries, the church grew several hundred new ministries. Congregations and other nonprofits are America’s largest employers. Volunteers show up for work in churches that “pay well.” The “salary” they seek is challenge, personal growth, opportunity to make a difference, and meaningful experiences and relationships. How well does your church pay?

1. Material drawn from John W. Wimberly Jr., *Mobilizing Congregations: How Teams Can Motivate Members and Get Things Done* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015). See also *Church Effectiveness Nuggets*, Vol. 23, “Fine Tuning the Organizational and Communication Engine,” <http://www.theparishpaper.com/sites/default/files/resources/Church%20Effectiveness%20Nuggets-%20Volume%2023.pdf>

2. Depending on team type, coordinators arise from the team or are recruited by church leadership.

3. Daniel Pink, *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009), p. 94.

4. William Dyer, et al., *Team Building*, 4th Edition (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007).