

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.

January 2018

Blessed New Year to you all!

At our Synod Council Meeting in September, it was decided that we would discontinue the Net-Worker program developed under our “Way Forward” task force. The positions will no longer be funded after January 31, 2018.

This was not an easy decision to come to. The idea of the Net-Workers was an example of the innovative, out-of-the-box thinking that I hope will become one of the hallmarks of the EWAID synod. The position was finally gaining some traction as the Net-Workers hit their strides, and congregations were starting to understand how to interact with and utilize them. We were seeing results, and those results were positive.

So why did we elect to discontinue the Net-Worker program? One reason is because it was inherently unfair to the Net-Workers. We were compensating them for 10-hours a week, but they were working many more than that to do the work we needed them to do. In some cases, the 10-hours per week barely covered the travel time it took a Net-Worker to work in their territory. As a Synod, we were balancing the deficit in our staff budgeting on the backs of the Net-Workers. We were also utilizing grant money from the SHARE fund to cover their salaries—and while that was an action that supported the congregations through these Net-Worker positions, it was never considered a permanent source of funding because it decreased the amount of money the Synod had to use to support congregational mission & ministry.

The Net-Workers came into being when we realized the Synod could no longer afford an Assistant to the Bishop. We took that position, and divided it between four geographic Network Areas. The idea was the four quarter time individuals would be more affordable than one full time individual. And while the cost math worked out, the responsibility math did not. The time/compensation allotted for the work may be cut into fourths, but often times the work itself was not.

I would like to thank Dave Kappus, Phylis Stromme, Barb Harrison-Condon, Kristin Koskella, Linda Howell, and Jim Peterson for the time they gave to support the work of the synod. They spoke to hundreds of people, compiled data, worked call processes, and helped congregations discuss future directions for ministry. Their work, and their dedication to it are deeply appreciated. In my hoped-for synodical future we could re-engage these positions as a way to further increase connectivity between congregations, the synods, and the churchwide expression of the ELCA.

But the Synod needs to look in different directions for staffing. Here are some of the things we are looking at for the future:

- As you read this we will be in the process of finding a new, full-time Director of Evangelical Mission. This position is funded through our Churchwide partner as a support of the mission and stewardship work that happens within congregations in the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod. We hope to have this new leader identified and in place by Lent.
- We will be working within our current structure to help address some of the gaps in staffing — specifically utilizing cluster Deans to take more active roles not only in their cluster, but also in the synod. The cluster Deans serve at the request of the Bishop, and are not financially compensated for their time. If your pastor is a Dean, please thank them for their time given on behalf of the Church, and model understanding and supportive behavior of this responsibility to those who feel the pastor's time belongs to the congregation alone. If you do not



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know what cluster your congregation is in, talk to your pastor. The Clusters and their Deans are as follows:

- o Cluster A (Upper Snake River): Pr. Jon Beake
 - o Cluster B (Treasure Valley): Pr. Ken Carrothers
 - o Cluster C (Tscemicum): Pr. Gail Hart
 - o Cluster D (Palouse): Pr. Phil Misner
 - o Cluster E (North Idaho): Pr. Lori Morton
 - o Cluster F (South Central Washington): Pr. Dennis Hickman
 - o Cluster G (Lower Columbia Basin): Pr. Kirsten Sauey Hofmann
 - o Cluster H (North Central Washington): Pr. Dave Haven
 - o Cluster I (Big Bend): Pr. Bob Kenyon
 - o Cluster J (Mt. Spokane): Pr. Duane Anderson
 - o Cluster K (Spokane Valley): Pr. Paul Anderson
 - o Cluster L (Spokane Westward): Pr. Liv Larson Andrews
- We will be asking more of Synod Council members—asking them to represent the Synod in their clusters, the way they represent their cluster to the Synod Council. We will be asking them to bring information to you, and report information back to the Synod Council. Each cluster has a representative on the Synod Council, and the Synod Council also has several “At Large” positions. New Council members are elected each year at the Synod Assembly, and the Council is made up of clergy and lay people. If you would like to be part of the Synod Council, please talk to Patty Cowan (Synod Nominating Committee) about how you can be a part of this important, passionate, thoughtful group. Contact the synod office for Patty’s contact info.
 - We have asked the cluster Deans and Synod Council reps to work together to schedule cluster meetings at least twice a year. Please encourage your Dean and your Council Rep to get these scheduled as quickly as possible, and to let me know when those meetings will be. I would like to be able to have those scheduled far enough in advance that I can be present for at least one cluster meeting per cluster in a year. (**Deans, Reps: Get on it! ☺**) Also, make the time to attend the Cluster meetings. Clusters are one of the key ways our Synod forges connections between leaders, congregations, and the synod. If you’re feeling disconnected from what is happening at the synod and churchwide level: attending Cluster meetings is an easy fix.
 - We will also be taking a serious look at the wisdom and feasibility of calling an Assistant to the Bishop. We have learned the work this position oversees is invaluable to both the Bishop and to the Synod. We are still in conversation about funding for that position, but there is a feeling that this position is an investment into the healthy future of the Eastern WA-ID synod, and is worth serious consideration.

We are in this staffing deficit because of decreases in mission support from our congregations. While giving from congregations has remained steady (thank you!), the number of congregations existing to contribute mission support has decreased. This is one of the realities our synod has to grapple with—synodical leadership is grateful for the support given, and seeks to be good stewards of the gifts our congregations give. This is leading us to explore new staffing models, and investigate new ways of funding for staffing needs. The reality is that with fewer congregations contributing to the synod financially through mission support: the more changes that will have to happen. I don’t see this reality as a bad thing. I see it as a challenging thing. It will force us to make decisions about what is truly important to the Synod, because there is no fat in the budget. But I also know it is in times of scarcity that we tend to rely more heavily on God. So I ask you to pray for our Synod—pray that God would lead us into the future planned for us; pray that we would be given a strong curiosity and rich imagination for where solutions might be found; pray that our leadership would be enlivened with joy and passion for the work the synod does in partnership with the congregations; pray that we would be wise stewards of all the gifts that God has given us as in-

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dividuals, congregations, and as a synod. Because ultimately, when you pray for the Synod: you're praying for yourselves as well. The Synod does not exist without you.

I am energized by the challenges we face, because I know that we do not face them alone. We face them together. Called together by God to be the people of the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod, we will seek to follow the call of the Spirit in the direction She has for us.

At the Bishop's election in May I spoke passionately about my conviction that God is not done with the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod, that we have overseen, continue to oversee, and will oversee in the future important and valuable ministries throughout the congregations and ministry sites of our synod. I reminded those in attendance that change (while scary) is not inherently bad—but is a sign of life and vitality. When we truly believe what we say when we say we trust God: then there is no fear—only transformation (which is one of our Synod's guiding principles).

Eight months into this call as Bishop, I still believe in the future of the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod. I know clear down to my bones that God is calling us to a life of ministry and vitality. I also know that it will not look like what has gone before—and that's OK. No matter what: we are the People of God, called to do the work of God in our daily lives, gathered together as the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. I'm excited to partner with you as we live into the future God has for us, whatever that may be, however it may look.

Soli Deo Gloria,

+Bishop Kristen

+Bishop Kristen

Does Your Congregation Have a Teen Interested in Helping Lead the Youth Leadership Summit?

Youth Core Leadership Team Position

Introduction

The Youth Core Leadership Team is composed of twelve high school youth from across the ELCA who have been identified as leaders in congregations and/or synods, and who desire the opportunity to dig more deeply into their own leadership and faith formation. Each year, six youth are added to this team as six participants are sent out from the team to discover new opportunities for leadership as young adults.

Purpose

The YCLT exists to provide leadership development opportunities to high school youth, to plan and lead the ELCA Youth Leadership Summit, and to serve as a focus group for ELCA Churchwide Ministries as they strive to do ministry with youth more effectively.

Who Should Apply

Youth who apply are expected to be engaged in their faith life and actively involved in a local congregation.

We seek applications from youth currently in 9th, 10th and 11th grades. We value and aspire to diversity across ethnicity, gender and geographic locale.

<http://elcayouthministry.com/yclt-app/>

Presiding bishop

Disengage the autopilot

By Elizabeth A. Eaton



I was driving to work one day thinking about my schedule—the meetings I needed to attend, reports I needed to finish, preparations still to be completed for upcoming travel, email I needed to answer, phone calls I absolutely had to make, and compiling a grocery

list in my head so I would pick up what I needed for supper on the way home from work. All of a sudden I found myself pulling into the parking garage at the Lutheran Center. I had driven the 9 miles to work and had no idea how I got there. I didn't remember the traffic lights, the turns, the scenery—nothing. I had been so absorbed in what was coming up that I was completely oblivious to the present.

I think this experience is not unique to me. We set part of our lives on autopilot and set the planning, list-making, what-if scheduling part on overdrive. Our culture actually encourages this. When do back-to-school sales start showing up in stores? When do Christmas decorations appear in town squares and at the mall? We have already seen evidence that the next presidential campaign is underway. It can be light all the time now. Burgers or tacos at your favorite fast-food emporium are available around the clock. It's disorienting. We're thrown out of rhythm.

I remember how confused I became when I first started my call as synod bishop. Gone were the familiar patterns of parish ministry: Monday I got organized for the week, Wednesday night was catechism, Thursday night was choir practice, and everything pointed toward Sunday. The year made sense: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost. As synod bishop and in my current call, we plan so far in advance that I'm not always sure what time of year it is—and there are so many time zones!

Now, planning is a good and necessary thing. One ought to be aware of what is coming up,

what needs to be done, and where one needs to be. But I found that I was so driven by all of the contingencies and possibilities that I was everywhere all of the time and therefore not anywhere at all.

I asked my spiritual director about this and she recommended that I meditate on these four words: "Just this. Just now." It's a simple discipline, but not an easy one. It can alleviate all that anticipatory stress, but only if we are willing to quiet down. Near the end of Psalm 46, after descriptions of tumult and uproar, the Lord says, "Be still and know that I am God."


Here we are in Advent. This season doesn't exist in secular culture, where everything is barreling toward Christmas. No time to wait, no time to notice, no time to be present. Not this. Not now. All of a sudden we will find ourselves on the day after Christmas not knowing how we got there.

Advent is a holy season, a season that bids us to be present, to be still. So much is evoked in this season—hope, longing, the bittersweet awareness that the world is beautiful and broken. Consider all of these things. Sit with them. Pray with them. Be aware of this time of great promise that comes, at least in the Northern Hemisphere, when night is longest. "In a momentary meeting of eternity and time, Mary learned she would carry both the mortal and divine" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 258). Disengage the autopilot. Notice.

The rest of that Advent hymn invites us to be present:

We are called to ponder mystery and await the coming Christ, to embody God's compassion for each fragile human life.

God is with us in our longing to bring healing to the earth, while we watch with joy and wonder for the promised Savior's birth.

Just this. Just now. 

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

This article original appeared in the December 2017 issue of *Living Lutheran*. Reprinted with permission



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

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am writing to you about the future of NRIT, the Northern Rockies Institute of Theology. For four decades NRIT has provided continuing theological education to the clergy and laity of the Montana Synod. When people are asked what they appreciate about the Montana Synod, NRIT routinely floats to the top. We are proud of NRIT and value it.

We are at a watershed moment for NRIT. NRIT is running out of money. As a matter of fact, the situation is so dire that Director Jenny Kunka has no events planned after the 2018 Midwinter Theological Conference at Essex. There simply isn't enough money to pay the speakers and travel.

How has this happened? In the beginning NRIT was funded through insurance company dollars. Then ELCA and Synod money kept it going, and then only Synod money. In the mean time, costs have gone up, and there are multiple other opportunities for pastors to get their 50 hours of annual continuing education. NRIT is no longer the only game in town, and the numbers verify that. We simply are not getting enough participants in our events to cover the costs.

We are going to use 2018 to discern the future of NRIT, and we invite you into the conversation. Among the questions we will ask are:

- Is NRIT still needed?
- How might NRIT serve the needs of the church most effectively?
- How might NRIT be financially sustainable?
- Is integrating NRIT more fully into the Montana Synod helpful or counterproductive?

The Synod Council and the NRIT Committee will assist in facilitating these conversations, and look forward to hearing from you.

For many years NRIT was not only the pride of the Montana Synod, but the envy of other synods. We were able to present a variety of topics with top-notch speakers, all in our own back yard. Speakers have always commented on the quality and interest of our participants. They still do. But we cannot keep doing the same thing with diminished resources. So we welcome your prayers, we appreciate your extra donations, but most of all we covet thoughtful conversation with you over the next year. Thank you.

In Christ,

Jessica Crist, Bishop

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 (available for the open-ended call)
VP Visitation Pastor		

POS	LOCATION/CONGREGATION	STATUS	PASTORAL CARE	
P	Cheney, WA – Emmanuel Lutheran	B	Ward Robak	I
P	Cheney, WA – Campus Ministry EWU	B		
P	Chewelah, WA – St. Paul Lutheran	A	Bob Edwards	SP
P	Davenport, WA - Zion Lutheran	NV	Stacey Friedlein	TEEM
P	Davenport (Egypt), WA – Christ Lutheran	NV	Stacey Friedlein	SP
P	Ephrata, WA - Holy Trinity	B	Ethan Bergman	SP
P	Goldendale, WA – Christ the King	NV	Mary Johnson	SP
P	Kennewick, WA – First Lutheran	A	Alan Berg	I
P	Leavenworth, WA - Faith Lutheran	B	Misael Fajardo-Perez	I
P	Lind, WA – Good Hope Lutheran	C		
P	Mattawa, WA – Grace Lutheran	B		
P	Otis Orchards, WA – Peace Lutheran	A	David Olson	TM
P	Quincy, WA - St. Paul Lutheran	B	Ethan Bergman	SP
P	Spokane, WA – St. Mark's Lutheran	A	Eric Dull Kate LePard	CP
P	Toppenish, WA – Faith Lutheran	NV	Phylis Stromme	I
P	Sunnyside, WA – Our Saviour's	NV	Phylis Stromme	I

Calls Accepted

Seminarian Anne Palma has accepted the call to serve Our Savior Lutheran – Twin Falls, ID. She plans to begin January 7

Rev. Patricia Heath has accepted the call to serve St. Paul Lutheran Church – Colville, WA. She plans to begin early January, 2018

Ordinations - Anne Palma will be ordained to Word and Sacrament, January 6, at 11:00 am at Immanuel Lutheran Church – Boise, ID.

Retirements - Rev. Ginny Krekling has retired from the roster of Word and Sacrament December 1, 2017

From Your Synod Staff

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Bishop Kristen Kuempel,

Net-Workers Rev. Phylis Stromme, Rev. Davis Kappus and Rev. Barbara Harrison-Condon

Assembly Manager Julia Bennett

Cathy Steiner and Gib Dominguez

Watch for Assembly Information

In Next Month's Newsletter

April 27-29 in Yakima, Washington

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 . . .

Those with illness and pain, especially when these afflictions are not outwardly visible.

Those who are anxious, or worried about an uncertain future.

Those congregations and leaders in call process.

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.



I Called You By Name

2018 May Youth Weekends at Holden Village

Three sessions:

- May 18-20 (Friday – Sunday)
- May 25-27 (Friday – Sunday)
- May 27-29 (Sunday – Tuesday)

Themed from Isaiah 43:1, each weekend features a different speaker and music leader(s)
See who is joining us at the Village and read all about them [HERE](#).

Cost is \$205/person - This includes boat transportation; lodging and meals at Holden Village; all program costs including a t-shirt, craft options, and ice cream!

Additional funds for the gift shop are encouraged, but not necessary. The village does take credit cards now.

Registration will begin January 3, 2018 There is a maximum of 120 people each session. The goal is to get as many students up to Holden as possible. When registering your group, be mindful of the ratio of 1 adult to 10 students. Please collaborate with other congregations in your area to coordinate sharing adult leaders. (We will be as helpful as we can in connecting groups who could share a male/female chaperone, too!) We do anticipate filling up quickly. We will maintain a wait list.

Important notes: This is an 'unplugged' weekend in many ways. For those of you unfamiliar with Holden Village, there is no cell phone or internet reception in the Village. Holden generates their own power, and conserve that power by not bringing/using electrical gadgets (no hair dryers, curling irons, etc.)

May Youth Weekends at Holden Village are subject to safety rules as set by the US Forest Service. They have the ability to reduce and increase attendees, cancel or extend time at Holden Village due to environmental safety concerns. In the event of a cancellation, May Youth Weekend will work to refund as much of the cost of the event as possible in a timely manner. In the event of an extension of stay please make sure that participants with medication needs have at least 7 days of back up provisions.

The Children, Youth and Family Committee of the Northwest Washington Synod has taken on leadership for the May Youth Weekends, but please note that each congregation is ultimately responsible for their group. You will be asked to sign a liability release acknowledging that at registration. The NWWA Synod and Holden Village are not liable



EASTERN WASHINGTON IDAHO SYNOD

of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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January 2018 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 2017

- 24 Christmas Eve - Go To Church
- 25 Synod Office Closed - Christmas
- 26-29 Synod Office Closed

January 2018

- 14-17 Byberg Preaching Conference
- 15 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - Synod Office Closed
- 22 Assembly Committee Meeting - Yakima, WA
- 25 Executive Committee Meeting Spokane, WA
- 26-27 Synod Council Meeting - Spokane, WA
- 27 Faith Action Network Annual Legislative Conference - St. Mark's - Spokane, WA



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

Staff

- Bishop The Rev. Kristen E.M. Kuempel
- 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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CONQUERING THE CUTBACK SYNDROME

“We simply have too many churches in this small town,” declared a respected lay leader, Tom McClain, in a long-range planning meeting. “And three are from the same denomination as our church! It makes perfect sense to merge our congregation with the West Main Street Church. And if our other two denominational churches merge, our community would then have two strong congregations. I think two healthy churches better represents our denomination than four struggling congregations.”

Although Tom’s conclusion seems logical, his approach reveals a textbook example of the cutback syndrome. Across the United States, church leaders use this common planning strategy to “fix” perceived problems and challenges. Other familiar examples in the syndrome include arguments to merge church school classes, reduce the number of worship services, or merge youth groups (typically the junior high or middle school group with the high school group). More than 1,300 congregations annually take the more extreme action of merging with another church. Finally, the ultimate cutback option involves closing the church doors permanently—a choice made by more than 3,500 churches annually.

What Is the Cutback Syndrome?

A syndrome that affects an organization involves a characteristic combination of opinions (thoughts), emotions (feelings), or behavior (actions). In church life, the cutback syndrome reflects the human temptation to over-simplify when complex problems arise. As *feelings* of fear around these problems codify, leaders and members want to find a way to make a situation easier to understand, and the primary *thought* is to solve it with simple solutions. Generally, this prompts leaders to make arguments that place a premium on efficiency and economy. The proposed *actions* take aim at eliminating what appears to be unnecessary, redundant, or inefficient organizational features or groups in the church.

The tragic consequence of the syndrome is how it accelerates downward momentum rather than stabi-

lizing the church or reversing decline. Imagine what happens when you pull the plug on a sink full of water. As the water rushes down the drain, you can see a circular motion similar to a small tornado that gradually pulls any remaining water down with it. Some planners describe a project or effort on the brink of failure as “circling the drain.” Because cuts produce a downward force that creates even more momentum, the result is less positive impact and greater negative impact with each new cut.¹

What Creates the Cutback Syndrome?

Sources within the church and larger social trends push congregations into the syndrome. Six causes form the foundation:²

1. Members and leaders sense a gap between their perceived ideal and what appears to be a far less efficient reality in church life. The cultural ideal of “bigger is better” affects church models as well. Any congregation or group diminishing in size finds the ideal/reality discrepancy discouraging, which draws them into the syndrome. Another related dimension of the “bigger is better” ideal



PASTOR DOUG TENDED TO IGNORE THE WARNING SIGNS.

is the idea of a community “monopoly” (reflected in Tom’s argument). Leaders believe reducing the number of choices strengthens the remaining options.

2. Whether it concerns ministry, programs, outreach, church growth, or problem-solving, leaders make false assumptions. They assume that the best approach will be logical, rational, functional, efficient, or economical. However, in congregations, most people think, feel, and act in terms of relationships. Personal histories—many formed over a long period—are intertwined with the histories of other members and are cemented at the place where their friendships formed: the church itself. Evaluating results by relationships leads to a different perspective and metric.

3. Many churches exhibit a strong orientation toward the past and feel the urge to recreate that past. Cutting back on redundancies and inefficiencies (particularly *new* positions in the church or *new* missions and programs) to recreate that past shows a clear misunderstanding of the true issues facing a congregation.

4. Most churches value unity and avoid conflict. Although this value is understandable, the dark side of unity is conformity. One way to simplify a complex situation is to create greater homogeneity in thought, feelings, and actions among members. Rarely do members hold this conformity belief consciously, but unconscious beliefs can go a long way in feeding the syndrome.

5. Another notion that creates the cutback syndrome is that a narrower focus means “easier to manage.” The thinking goes that if we can reduce the scope of the subject somehow, we can more easily deal with the problem.

6. When many members feel pessimistic about the church’s future, conditions are ripe for the syndrome to emerge. Pessimism spreads like a virus and infects all planning strategies.

Is There a Cure?

First, the congregation must be willing to identify the syndrome’s presence. Once this pattern is named and acknowledged, then leaders find it easier to combat the ways it has affected planning and decision-making.

Second, the congregation must recognize the necessity of change for future viability and growth. Looking toward the future with optimism means affirming change no matter how uncomfortable it seems. Affirming change requires openness to new potential alternatives that in the past were not out in the open or were unthinkable.

Third, a congregation must stop placing a premium on economy, simplicity, functionalism, efficiency, and

conformity. Instead, pursue alternatives that maximize choices for members and the community, which affirms the values of diversity and pluralism. Develop strategies that maximize ministry to and with people, rather than preserving real estate.

Fourth, a congregation must change their approach to planning. The focus should shift to possibilities rather than problems. Leaders can evaluate decisions and policies by asking: does our current model accomplish the church’s mission? Will our actions move us forward in mission? Is our ministry here worth the changes needed? Are we willing to finish the job no matter how long it takes?

As is the case with most syndromes, the presenting traits fall along a spectrum of mild to most severe. One factor—church stability—plays a key role. Is the church stable, experiencing gradual decline, or desperate? Intervention is possible, but fast action is required if the congregation is desperate. These signs indicate how quickly leaders need to act:

- has fewer than 50 worshippers;
- 25 or fewer giving households or people;
- fewer than one lay leader for every ten worshippers;
- the average membership tenure exceeds 10 years;
- the average age of a member vs. community residents’ average age exceeds 10 years; and
- the racial/ethnic or income status of members differs significantly from people in the community.³

Rapid response is needed if the congregation exhibits four or more of these signs.

The Silent Killer

“There are no hopeless situations; there are only people who have grown hopeless about them.”⁴

Many diseases—hypertension, colon cancer, and diabetes—disguise their warning signs. The absence of symptoms or subtle symptoms means that, as time passes, the disease progresses and becomes a “silent killer.” What are the warning signs in church life that we ignore or do not see? For many congregations, a lack of hope is the silent killer. Do you agree with this assertion?

1. Gary L. McIntosh, *There’s Hope for Your Church: First Steps to Restoring Health and Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 42.

2. Lyle Schaller, “The Cutback Syndrome,” *The Parish Paper*, Volume 8, Number 2 (1978).

3. McIntosh, 48-52.

4. Quote of Clare Booth Luce, McIntosh, 17.