



October 2014 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ –

May grace and peace be yours in abundance (1 Peter 1:2a).

In February I began a series of brief articles on the Marks of a Missional Congregation relying heavily on Stephen P. Bouman's, *The Mission Table: Renewing Congregation & Community* (© 2013 Augsburg Fortress).

Each article includes Scripture, questions for reflection and discussion, and a prayer. Perhaps your church council, adult study, youth group, coffee group will use these monthly writings as a time to engage in learning, discernment and reflection together. Previous month's articles are available on the synod website: www.albertasynod.ca

A congregation in mission is shaped by Word and sacraments.

The late Aidan Kavanaugh, a scholar of liturgics, said that the integrity of evangelism – that is, sharing the good news of God's grace – is directly related to the integrity of the liturgy.

"All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and good and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the good-will of all people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Acts 2:44-47).

In the wake of the Pentecost conversions to life in the risen Christ, those who had been filled with the Holy Spirit set a table in the local households. Assembly around the holy things became the form of mission. The community was drenched in prayer. In this community, everyone had gifts to give and everyone at the table was supported. People grew in their young faith, and as they did, they shared this burgeoning hope with others. The quality of the table they set became known.

Day by day the Lord set a place at the table for new brothers and sisters. It is a picture of mission today. Our world is hungry for tables of integrity where there is a place for everyone to make a difference in the world, bring their gifts, and step out into wider worlds and deeper faith. And so for us, our ministry is the legs we put on our prayers and liturgical practice...joining in God's mission.

The heartbeat of this Christ-shaped community is Word and sacraments.

Consider the heartbeat of baptism. We do not baptize our children (of any age) and leave them at the font. Baptismal ministry follows them into the world: to care and struggle for the schools in which they

learn, to guard the communal values that shape them, to nurture their relationships, and to provide them with mentors.

Consider the heartbeat of the Eucharist. If we eat at the altar of our congregations and others outside do not eat, or eat alone, Eucharistic ministry leads us out following the real presence of Jesus into the world where we connect with the community – our neighborhoods.

Our sharing the good news of God's grace is directly related to the integrity of the liturgy. Our joining God in God's mission is shaped by Word and sacraments.

Read and Reflect: Acts 2:44-47

Discuss and Reflect:

1. What in this reading leads you to say, "I wonder about...?", or, "I noticed...?"
2. Share a time when you experienced worship connecting in a concrete way to the neighborhood.
3. Comment on the following: our ministry is the legs we put on our prayers and liturgical practice...joining in God's mission.
4. What are some ways that your congregation's ministry of Word and sacraments spills over into the lives of your neighborhood?

Pray together: Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, but always to your glory and the welfare of your people, through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen. (Commitment, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, p. 86)

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

In Christ Jesus –
Shalom,
+Larry

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