

“Excellence in Leadership” for the Life of the World

by Pastor Sarah Moening

We are at a crossroads. We know that the old way of making disciples for Jesus no longer works. Many books over the last two decades have given us theory, statistics and antidotal evidence to this reality. We don't even need to rely on the books; we just need to attend a familiar church to know that something has changed significantly.

Knowing that we are at the crossroads, however, doesn't give us a roadmap or specific instructions for how we move forward. Those of us firmly planted in the institutional Church are unsure of what our spiritual home will look like in fifty years.

A way forward

If we are honest with ourselves and our sister and brothers in Christ, this uncertainty can lead to grief and anxiety. Although we may not be able to see too far down the road, I do believe that we have a way forward if we are willing to both let go of comfortable assumptions and remain open to a future not yet visible.

So, what if we shifted the story we are telling ourselves about the impending demise of mainline religion as we know it, and see this crossroads as an opportunity to realign ourselves and our expectations of Church with the teachings of Jesus? Living during this historical intersection, we can recalibrate our aim toward Gospel values, let go of primarily focusing on institutional preservation and begin to listen deeply to where God is calling us as the body of Christ. **Today is a fine time to be the Church.**

Jesus prioritized the commandments of love; love God with your whole being and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus, in all that he said and did during those short, yet profound three years of ministry lived out the Creator's unconditional love for all of creation. Jesus embodied what God intended for humanity in order to be fully human.

Love is complicated

As followers of this One, love becomes our starting point, love remains our ending point, and love must be the process by which we move through our life journey. And yet . . . loving is a complicated, complex nuanced human endeavor. Culture, history, the wounds of our parents, the systems we humans build all muddy our real-world experience of loving.

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

-Matthew 28:18-20

As Jesus, the crucified and risen savior of the world, ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father, he commissioned his followers “to go and make disciples of all nations.” A daunting task!

—continued on the next page

Roster Changes

FEBRUARY 2018

The Rev. Paul E. Johnson deceased
 2/11/2018

The Rev. William Duty deceased
 2/18/2018

The Rev. Donald Saul deceased
 2/20/2018

The Rev. Elena Liliana Stahlberg from Pastor redeveloper Lord of the Mountains Lutheran Church, Dillon, CO to Pastor Lord of the Mountains Lutheran Church, Dillon, CO 2/26/2018

MARCH 2018

The Rev. Debra Engquist from Interim Pastor Cross of Christ Lutheran Church, Broomfield, CO to retired 3/1/2018

The Rev. Elwood (Woody) Carlson from on-leave-from-call to retired 3/1/2018

Deacon Carol Pyeatt deceased 3/11/2018

The Rev. Gail Mundt from interim pastor to Executive Pastor Christ Lutheran Church, Highlands Ranch, CO 3/12/2018

APRIL 2018

The Rev. Paul Joncas retired 4/1/2018

The Rev. Jo Ann Neal from Sierra Pacific Synod to Pastor Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Casper, WY 4/1/2018

The Rev. LaVonne Johnson from Pastor St. Mark Lutheran Church, Roswell, NM to Stated Supply Pastor, Sierra Blanca Presbytery, Corona, NM 4/18/2018

MAY 2018

The Rev. Kristi Koppel from Pastor Our Savior Lutheran Church Alamogordo, NM to Pastor St. Paul Lutheran Church, Albuquerque, NM 5/1/2018

The Rev. Karen Weissenbuehler deceased 5/7/2018

The Rev. J. Daniel Hays from Pastor Peace Lutheran Church, Akron, CO to Pastor Peace Lutheran Church, Sterling, CO 5/20/2018

JUNE 2018

The Rev. Frank Philipp retired 6/1/2010
The Rev. Russell Sorenson retired 6/1/2010

The Rev. Daniel Tisdell from Pastor First Lutheran Church Gypsum, CO to Pastor St. Mark Lutheran Church, Roswell, Roswell, NM 6/10/2018

Roster Changes (cont'd)

JUNE 2018 cont'd

The Rev. Randall Mundt from On-Leave-From-Call to Interim Pastor Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Canon City, CO 6/10/2018

The Rev. Stacie Dougherty from Pastor Tabor Lutheran Church, Pueblo, CO to On-Leave-From-Call 6/16/2018

The Rev. Richard Gianzero from candidate to Pastor Nativity Lutheran Church, Commerce City, CO 6/18/2018

The Rev. Joel Rothe from candidate to Pastor Christ the King Lutheran Church, Denver, CO 6/24/2018

JULY 2018

The Rev. Matthew Powell from Pastor Cross of Hope Lutheran Church, Albuquerque, NM to Pastor Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Albuquerque, NM 7/2/2018

The Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber from Pastor, House for All Sinners and Saints to On-Leave-From-Call 7/9/2018

The Rev. Scott Thalacker from Pastor Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Logan, UT to Co-Pastor Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Los Alamos, NM

The Rev. Wes Dunbar from Pastor Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Fort Morgan, CO and Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Brush, CO to Pastor St. John Lutheran Church, Thornton, CO 7/15/2018

The Rev. Pamela Stofferahn from St. Paul Area Synod to Pastor United Church of the San Juans, Ridgway, CO 7/25/2018

“Excellence in Leadership” cont'd

Historically, Christians have seen this charge through the very human lens of the ends justifying the means.

Consequently, we used very unloving methods to convert, subdue and conquer those who didn't know Christ. We Christians have also used judgment, shame and a narrow litmus test for who is inside the Christian fold and who remains outside God's salvation. The irony throughout much of Christian history is that we have used broken and damaged human lenses to define or meet out God's salvation.

Salvation is abundant life

God's salvation is the abundant life that comes when we find our lives

“interrupted by and reinterpreted by the crucified and risen Lord,” when we experience the peace of Jesus Christ, the peace that surpasses all human understanding. (*James Alison, Jesus the Forgiving Victim*)

The truth of God's salvation is unchanging. The opportunity of our time in history is to hear this truth in a way that transforms our own hearts and then begins to shift the systems we humans have created, systems that have become obstacles to making disciples in this generation. When we live out of a story of scarcity, when we argue over power and money, when we are stuck grieving the loss of the way it has always been done, God's salvation goes out of focus.

From my own experience, which comes from my own life-long personal spiritual journey and my twenty years of work in the Church, I believe that God's salvation, abundant life, the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven is the process, the way we experience God. How we interact with one another, the quality of our relationships, living and acting congruent with who God is calling us to be, is our experience of God's salvation, our immersion into the Kingdom of God.

Attending to relationship – honest, humble, courageous relationship – is the work of the kingdom and therefore the work of every faith community. Strong leadership is knowing ourselves well and from that place of deep knowing, reaching out to others in life-giving and world changing ways.

For the sake of the world

Christianity, being the Church, the Body of Christ in the world is a communal event. God calls each and every one of us to be our best selves, and we only become our best selves when authentically engaging with the world around us. We need supportive, deeply loving relationships that will encourage and challenge us to become who God is creating us to be.

Excellent leadership begins with spiritually connecting our true identity with our surrounding community (friends, family, work, faith community and civic community) and then learning how to use ourselves as primary agents in practicing God's kingdom on earth, proclaiming God's unconditional love for the sake of the world.

Excellence in Leadership

As we move forward as the Rocky Mountain Synod we will be creating learning opportunities for all leaders; lay people in the pew, Congregational Councils and ministry boards, as well as deacons and pastors. We are calling this leadership effort “Excellence in Leadership.” We don't know exactly what the future holds, but we do know that it begins with each personal journey toward emotional and spiritual wholeness. Please join the conversation.

We encourage you to read “Excellence in Leadership” with your ministry leaders and reflect together.

What do you notice? What do you wonder? What questions emerge?

Name a significant joy that comes from being part of your faith community.

Name a source of anxiety for you as you think about the future of the church.

How does Jesus' commission impact your life? The ministry of your community?

Christ's Church
better together