

Tuesday Reflection for February 2, 2021

Together!

1 Corinthians 1:10

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of one Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.

Writing this reflection during a snowstorm and just heard that the groundhog is predicting six more weeks of winter. Ugh! Makes me want to just go back to bed and put my head under the covers until spring comes. But alas, we must shovel all this snow and keep moving forward. As we approach the season of Lent, I am taking time to reflect on my relationship with God and I invite you to do the same.

Last week I talked about the future directions for Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and specifically looked at the congregational vitality data. The first thing that vital congregations do is strengthen their relationship with God.

The three objectives within this goal, center around being able to articulate how God shows up in our daily lives and what God is calling us to do both individually and corporately. Can you identify ways that you see God acting in your daily life? In the biweekly staff meeting we refer to these moments as God sightings. When you are intentional in looking for ways that God acts in our lives daily, you will be surprised as how often you can see that God is present and active in every moment of life. Think about the past week, what examples have you seen? Perhaps it was a phone call from someone checking in or perhaps you made the phone call. Could be neighbors helping each other get sidewalks and driveways shoveled. Maybe you have children or grandchildren that have been frolicking in the snow enjoying God's creation.

So many ways to see God at work in our lives. The next objective is to have a clear understanding of God's larger mission and our purpose for this time and place. What is God calling us to do as a congregation in Bethlehem? Can see you what your role is in our mission? Everyone will have different roles, some will help to organize ministries, some will do the actual work, others will pray for those who work and those who receive. Each one of us has God given gifts and abilities and as we use them in cooperation with each other we achieve the mission God has for us.

The final objective is that as a community of faith we can articulate our purpose and create a plan for implementation. I think this is the hardest objective because it involves communicating the plan well and implementing the plan. As we work with the Transitional Team to develop what it would look like if our three congregations came together, we are starting to see what might be possible if we join all our gifts and resources. We can already see some things happening. We have worked jointly to do the sleeping mat ministry. We are working jointly to support the Bethlehem Emergency Shelter. Together we have been assisting various food banks in Bethlehem. Wonderful ministries are happening within our community of faith.

I am looking forward to the reports of the Transitional Team as the subgroups are developed and report back. The reports of each subgroup are available after the council has reviewed them and when we can gather, these reports will be the subject of town halls meetings. Each member of our three congregations will be given an opportunity to comment and eventually to vote to come together as one congregation. This is a process, and the pandemic has made it more difficult and yet we are moving forward. We are working together to articulate our purpose and create a plan to implement what God is calling us to do in this time and place.

I pray that working together we can strengthen our individual relationships with God and our corporate relationship with God. Together we can be God's hands and feet for each other and for our community. Stay safe and be careful shoveling all the snow!

In Peace,

Pastor Suzanne