

Tuesday Reflection for February 9, 2021

Working 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.

As I write this reflection more snow is in the forecast. I guess if you enjoy winter, this one is for you. As for me, I am dreaming about warmer weather. As we approach the season of Lent, I am taking time to reflect on my relationships with each of you and I invite you to do the same.

Two weeks ago, I talked about the future directions for Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and specifically looked at the congregational vitality data. Last week I addressed the first goal of vital congregations and it is strengthening their relationship with God. The second goal is to nurture relationships.

The three objectives within this goal, center around working together. The first objective is the development of relationships among leadership, pastors, and staff, and members to create a loving community with good communication. Good communication is so very important for any organization and the church is no exception. Personal experience has taught me that good communication involves open and honest conversations at every level. We are trying to keep communication going even when we cannot be together face to face. We use email for daily communication and send information in the mail for those who do not have computers and/or internet access. We also post everything on our two websites, www.upgbethlehem.org and www.stjohnswindish.org. We are trying to make good communication a priority as we are working together and looking at what one single congregation would look like in the future. If you have questions or concerns please communicate those to me, Pastor Jerry, or any member of our staff. We are available and willing to address your questions and concerns.

The second objective is to ensure that people work together respectfully through successes and challenges. Needless to say, the pandemic has challenged all of us. It has also given us great opportunities for success. We livestream worship, we have one joint staff meeting, our standing committees are working together, and we are doing several wonderful ministries together. Using technology, we are getting to know one and another whether it is through a zoom meeting, zoom bible study or coffee and conversation over zoom. I am constantly amazed at the wonderful connections we already had and how we are now building on those connections and moving to deeper levels of respect and togetherness.

The final objective is to enhance a sense of ownership and belonging that drives the commitment and engagement in the mission of the church. As we get to know each other and help everyone develop their gifts and talents we are doing some amazing ministries. Overall, I sense a commitment to working together in ministry so that we can better serve God and our neighbors. Together we can do so much more than we could ever do alone. Think about some of the wonderful ministries we have done so far.

We have the bringing it home ministry so that everyone can join us in worship. We made and delivered season's greetings to every nursing home resident in our area, that is over 1500 cards! We have almost finished 50 sleeping mats for those who have no place to sleep. We have volunteers serving at several food banks and the Bethlehem Emergency Shelter. We are doing bible studies, book studies, and started a social justice team. We have youth activities and zoom events for those in third through sixth grade and our junior and senior high youth. There are so many more ministries that we are doing together.

I pray that working together we can strengthen our individual and corporate relationships with God and build nurturing relationships within our community of faith. Together we can be God's hands and feet for each other and for our community. Stay safe, wear your masks, get your vaccines and if you must shovel be careful!

In Peace,

Pastor Suzanne