

2018 Stewardship of Mission ~ devotions for leaders

Summer 2018: Lutheran Church of the Cross

Lutheran Church of the Cross (LCC) has been serving the neighbor since the migration of people from Finland, Sweden, Germany, and Denmark in the early 1900's. LCC is made up of a merger of Shepherd of the Hills, Bethany, St. Michael's and Holy Trinity back in 1967 and continues a specific Finnish language ministry in addition to regular worship in English. Their mission statement of "Be Fed! Have Faith! Be Free!" are all part of the daily life of this church.

On any Wednesday evening, you can go to the church and be served a free spaghetti meal followed by Evening Vespers. LCC feeds anywhere between 90-120 of its neighbors and is a place for those who may use this meal to supplement their daily diet to those who may find this the only meal they will have that day. When asked of Pastor Cary Bass-Deschenes "why do you do it?", the response is "to watch people's lives change"

LCC is a place for those who seek support and comfort. There are numerous AA and other 12-step groups that meet in the church's facility; months that have a 5th Sunday, a "Liturgy of the 12 Steps" service is given at 5:00PM centered on the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. Readings are both scriptural and are adopted from the Big Book of AA, the Basic Text of NA and other recovery-based literature. Talking with Pastor Bass-Deschenes, he reflects that many who come to this meeting find both the 12-step support and the comfort of church in one place.

One of the most significant ministries LCC supports is The Youth Emergency Assistance Hostel (YEAH) which provides shelter services for those age 18-24 and has 30-35 beds at the church. There are case management services for the youth and meals are served in the morning and in the evening. A poignant and real-world situation that Pastor Bass-Deschenes told me is there have been students from Cal Berkeley who have been residents at the shelter; paying for housing and tuition was something these students could not afford so YEAH became a place of solace for these students.

Who is our neighbor? It is the senior citizen you see on the street barely living off of their pension or social security check; it is the person who has been sober for a few weeks or for many months who seeks strength to not drink or use drugs again; it is the 18 year old youth who has aged out of foster care and must figure out how to make it on their own - these are all of our neighbors and through mission support from the Synod and the ELCA's "New and Renewing Mission" funds, LCC continues to be the good neighbor to those who need it the most.

What are some of the "visions to missions" Pastor Bass-Deschenes sees in LCC's future? A ministry to prisons and an "open cathedral" - bringing the church out from its physical walls to the street and to the people. Pastor Bass-Deschenes has the following scripture on the back of his business card and conveys the work Lutheran Church of the Cross does to be the body of Christ:

"I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me" Matthew 25:35-36

Reflections:

Where is your congregation on its vision to mission path?

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What vision(s) have become mission(s) and how will you continue to build on that strength?

How can you share other visions with your siblings in Christ to fulfill missions that serves our neighbors?