



Bethesda Outlook

March 2016

“Quit Thinking of the Church as a Family”

What is the church’s purpose? Why do we gather to hear the Word and receive the sacraments? These are questions worth asking periodically, in order to renew and refresh our sense of mission. Recently, I found a blog entry by Tony Robinson, a nationally-known UCC pastor in Seattle, the title of which was “Quit Thinking of the Church as a Family”. Since I think a lot of problems get created in congregations because of this tendency in thinking, I was intrigued. In this blog entry, Robinson writes (direct quotes are in italics):

“Our church is just like a family.” This is a common claim in many congregations, perhaps especially in smaller ones.

Robinson writes about a congregation in which he was going to begin ministry that enlisted the services of a national firm to do a “ministry audit” before beginning their ministry together. Robinson says that the firm’s very first recommendation, in bold print, read, “The most important thing (Name of Church) will ever do is end whatever amount of ongoing conflict exists as well as **quit thinking like a family.**” This, says Robinson, grabbed people’s attention. *Church leaders seemed both miffed and mystified. What did the consulting firm mean by its blunt directive? Didn’t Jesus speak of “all those who do the will of God” as his kin? (Matthew 12:50). The consulting firm elaborated: “**The purpose of the church is to transform both society and individuals to be more Christ-like. This concept goes way beyond family.**”*

This, writes Robinson, may be stiff but necessary medicine for many stuck or declining congregations. The purpose of the church is to change lives. That’s the “business” we are in. While some families certainly do that, forming and sustaining faithful and courageous people, the use of the “family” concept in congregations often seems to mean something else.

Many of the congregations that claim “We’re a family,” lose sight of larger transformative purposes and settle, instead, for the comfort and satisfaction of their members. The core purpose of a congregation — growing people of faith and helping people and communities move from despair to hope — gives way to lesser and even contrary purposes like keeping people happy. While it may not be a necessary outcome of the use of the family image, many congregations that gravitate towards it seem to make member comfort and satisfaction their de facto purpose.

That may be because “family” suggests to people something like, “We’re all loving and nice here.” That in turn often means no hard questions are asked and no honest challenges are allowed. It wouldn’t be nice.

I can think of other reasons to be cautious about “family” as our image for church. Families sometimes keep secrets that shouldn’t be kept in order to keep from bringing shame on the family name. And families aren’t typically that

easy to join.

If not family, then what? Robinson suggested using “other biblical images like “People of God,” “Creation of the Holy Spirit,” or “Body of Christ” as better ways to talk about the church. Unlike “family”, Robinson writes, these terms are uncommon enough not to carry baggage and images about which people already have their own “set ideas about what they mean.” *In some congregations, Robinson writes, I hear leaders address the congregation simply as “church.” That too seems promising, reminding the gathered community that they are the Church of Jesus Christ (and the building is not).*

Keeping the family members happy, having everyone know everyone else and get along like “a happy family,” isn’t really the point for Christian congregations. Their goal and purpose is both different and higher.

Robinson concludes: *If we must use “family,” we should be aware of the way that Jesus, while using “family,” also subverts conventional understandings of family and challenges their usual boundaries with a thoroughly new vision of “family.”*

A transition is not the only time to consider and reevaluate how we think and talk about “church,” nor is it the only time to consider to what it is that God calls us as a community of faith, as the Body of Christ in the world. We invite people to “come and see” in order to bring more people into contact with the living God so more people can experience the love and forgiveness of God through Christ. Our purpose is not to bring people into our congregations in order to get their money so we can prop up an institution that we’re afraid to lose. Our faith, according to Luther, is what compels us to “good works”—like working with God to repair the world, or inviting people to come and see, to come and worship, to come and experience what can happen when faith is alive and active. Don’t let fear win. Fear, not hate, is the opposite of love because the basis of hate is fear. We are called to love, to trust in God and God’s promises, and to love some more. Remember that God’s word teaches us that “perfect love casts out fear.” Kierkegaard wrote about a “leap of faith,” but it’s maybe more accurate to talk about a leap of love. You usually trust those you love, don’t you?

Peace,
Pastor Anderson

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 MARCH		1 Comm. Table clean up 7:00am—12:00pm	2 Lenten Service Soup/Bread—6pm Worship—7pm Al-Anon Mtg. 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal 8:00pm	3 Girl Scouts 6:00pm—8:00pm	4 Girl Scouts 5:00pm—8:00pm	5
6 Worship 10:15am Comm. Table prep. 4:00pm—7:00pm	7 Community Table Tutoring 10:00am—5:00pm Ruth/Miriam Circle 2:00pm—4:00pm Bethesda Community Table 8:30am—8:00pm Girl Scout Leaders 6:30pm—9:00pm Facilities Committee @ Bldg. 3 6:45pm	8 Comm. Table clean up 7:00am—12:00pmC	9 Lenten Service Soup/Bread—6pm Worship—7pm Al-Anon Mtg. 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal 8:00pm	10 Girl Scouts 6:00pm—8:00pm	11	12
13 Worship 10:15am Comm. Table prep. 4:00pm—7:00pm	14 Community Table Tutoring 10:00am—5:00pm Sue's Bible Study 2:00pm—3:30pm Bethesda Community Table 5:30pm—6:30pm Council Meeting 7:00pm—9:00pm	15 Comm. Table clean up 7:00am—12:00pm	16 Lenten Service Soup/Bread—6pm Worship—7pm Al-Anon Mtg. 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal 8:00pm	17 <u>NEWSLETTER</u> <u>DEADLINE</u> Girl Scouts 6:00pm—8:00pm	18 Girl Scouts 5:00pm—8:00pm	19 WORK PARTY 8:30am
20 PALM SUNDAY Worship 10:15am Comm. Table prep. 4:00pm—7:00pm	21 Community Table Tutoring 10:00am—5:00pm Bethesda Community Table 5:30pm—6:30pm	22 Comm. Table clean up 7:00am—12:00pm	23 Al-Anon Mtg. 7:00pm	24 Maundy Thursday Service—7pm	25 Good Friday Service—7pm	26
27 EASTER Worship: 8:30 & 11am Breakfast: 9:30-10:45am Comm. Dinner prep. 3:00pm	28 Community Table Tutoring 10:00am—5:00pm Sue's Bible Study 2:00pm—3:30pm Bethesda Community Table 5:30pm—6:30pm	29 Comm. Table clean up 7:00am—12:00pm	30 Al-Anon Mtg. 7:00pm	31 Girl Scouts 6:00pm—8:00pm	<h1>2016</h1>	



- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 - Ashley Schwald | 17 - Molly Currier |
| 2 - Sharon Boehm | 25 - Reanne Testin (Halladay) |
| 16 - Mark Currier | 28 - Ron Massey |

Spring work day is coming!

As is our tradition and need, the annual spring work party and dress up of the church buildings and grounds for Easter will soon be upon us.

The Facilities and Grounds Committee will again lead the effort on Saturday, March 19, ahead of Palm Sunday.

We will keep a list of things to be done on the Fellowship Hall wall near the door. Please check the list in advance of the work day for something that fits your ability and timing for the tasks at hand. The committee can guide you and provide materials and tools needed for completion of tasks.

We will be on hand by 8:30 a.m. Coffee will be made and kept warm all day. Lunch will be provided by the Hospitality Committee and has always been very hearty and very delicious.

We look forward to seeing as many of you that can possibly come for some part of the day even if it is only a short time. Weather will not be a deterrent as we will be inside for cleaning and doing interior work too.

Bring sons, daughters and grandchildren. All are welcome! Any questions ask Larry, Cliff or Joan. Thank you from the committee!



Bethesda Spring Plant Sale and Raffle

Saturday, May 7th 9:00am-2:00pm

Bethesda Lutheran Church Plant Sale and Raffle will be held on Saturday, May 7th starting at 9:00am. There will be many vegetable starts as well as lovely flowers, shrubs, and houseplants. One dollar will purchase a hot dog and soda.

Joan Minnis, plant sale coordinator announced, "The proceeds from the plant sale and raffle will go into the general fund".

Lots of volunteers are needed to help. Please let Joan Minnis or Jeannette Antice know how you will be assisting with this fun event.

- On Sunday, March 13th, following the church service, a seed planting event will happen in building 3
- Donations of soil, transplanted plants from your garden (Joan Minnis will be happy to store plants at her home)
- Items for the raffle (gloves, garden tools, garden art, and herb gardens) Raffle chair, Becky Smith, will be accepting the donations for the raffle.
- Set up on May 7th begins at 8:00am
- Helpers on the day of the sale to assist customers
- Volunteers to help with the hot dogs and soda
- Clean up crew

Tell your friends and neighbors about the plant sale and raffle, it's a great event and they will be glad they came!

Interim Pastor
Pr. Kathleen Anderson

Office Administrator
Jean Leavens
425-778-6390

Treasurer:
Sue Rasmussen
425-357-6272

Musician:
Vic Peters
206-789-1699

Altar Care:
Joy DeGraff
425-778-5040

Council ~ 2015-16

President:
Joy DeGraff
425-778-5040

Vice President:
Sharon Boyd
425-610-4588

Secretary
Katherine Dedrick
425-672-9080

Jeanette Antice
425-742-4216

Bill Johnson
206-300-2440

Darlene Johnston
425-673-5168

Caryl Klingensmith
425-775-0478

Joan Minnis
425-778-0309

Cliff Pearson
425-275-3590

THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS FOR 2015

The rules have changed for Thrivent Choice Dollars. You should have received an e-mail or a letter from Thrivent stating where you wish your Choice Dollars to go. The deadline is March 31 for funds in 2015. If you have not done this, we request that you do one of the following:

You can call 1-800-847-4836 and say "Thrivent Choice". You need to say or enter your Social Security number and press 1 to direct the Choice Dollars or press 2 to hear the terms and conditions. A representative will then work with you to direct Choice Dollars. If you decide to say Bethesda Lutheran Church, be sure you tell them Mountlake Terrace, WA as there are several Bethesda churches. You will have to call several times a year since they are no longer recurring.

If you prefer to use the computer, visit Thrivent.com/thriventchoice. Click on "log in" at the top right of the screen and enter your My Thrivent user ID and password. (If you haven't registered on Thrivent.com, click on "register now" to register for full access.) Look for your designated Choice Dollars amount on the right side of the screen. Click on "Direct Choice Dollars" in the Thrivent Choice box on your My Thrivent page. Search the catalog of organizations to find your choice. Click on "Direct Choice Dollars Now" to direct your designated Choice Dollars to benefit that organization.

The amount of Thrivent Choice dollars received by Bethesda Lutheran in 2015 was \$3,751.00 and that has been put in the general account.

Your Thrivent Congregational Coordinators,
Joan Minnis, Jeanette Anstice, Dick Anstice, Donna Veveris, Cliff Pearson & Katherine Dedrick

TRANSITION TEAM NEWS

Bethesda now has a Transition Team. As I mentioned at the January congregational meeting, this is an essential part of the interim process. Most congregational constitutions do not include guidelines or recommendations for forming this Team, so formation often is up to the interim pastor. As I have gotten to know people at Bethesda, I have discovered that there are quite a few who are interested in and have a vision for the future of Bethesda as a church and for the ministry of this church. I have asked a few of these to serve on the Transition Team, and they are as follows:

Charles Chisholm, Katherine Dedrick, Joy Degraff, Paula Dibble, Tim Hillerman, Darlene Johnston, Lyn Miner, and Wendell Wettland

As I also mentioned at the January congregational meeting, the task of the Transition Team is to work on the Ministry Site Profile (MSP). This is essentially Bethesda's resume in your search for a new pastor. The bishop will do his best to match Bethesda's profile with the profile of a clergy person so that the two profiles are complementary. The Transition Team fills out the MSP by doing a lot of legwork: gathering statistical and demographic information, polling and talking with congregational members so they can articulate Bethesda's vision for mission and ministry, discover mission and ministry priorities, what kind of strengths you're looking for in a pastor, and ministry style—among other things. The MSP is about 13 pages long and is meant to give both the bishop and a prospective pastor a snapshot of Bethesda right now. All of this work is complementary to the call committee's (when one is formed), and the call committee has the option to rework any part of the MSP that they think might need tweaking.

In Bethesda's case, the Transition Team also will be looking at options for the future, four of which I mentioned at the January meeting:

1. Call a new pastor
2. Go into redevelopment, possibly with a parallel ministry
3. Sell the property and relocate
4. Call 63 years of ministry a job well done and close the doors

Please understand that a decision about Bethesda's future cannot be made by anyone except the congregation as a whole, although any decision will be made in consultation with the bishop's office. Neither the Transition Team, nor the pastor, nor any one person or small group of people, nor even the bishop, can make any decision like this for you. Your future is in your hands. I encourage you to pray about Bethesda's future, as well as your present, asking God to help you and the congregation as a whole to discern what might be the better course for all of you and especially for your mission and ministry.

So please be sure to talk with the members of your Transition Team when they ask. They will need all the information they can get from as many people as possible in order to best complete the MSP so that it reflects who Bethesda is right now. I also invite you to pray for your Transition Team, and, in fact, I invite you to partner with someone from the Team so that you can have opportunities to pray together. Bethesda has some weighty decisions ahead, and none should be made lightly, but with lots of prayer and hope and trust in the God who makes all things new.

Peace,
Pastor Anderson