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**Spirituality, Evangelism and Justice:
Telling the Story, Sharing the Message of the Jesus Movement**
Jesus, Justice, and Jubilee

I. Introduction

What an amazing thing to get to be with you, the Episcopal Church in South Carolina, for something as wonderful as this Forum on “Spirituality, Evangelism and Justice: Telling the Story, Sharing the Message of the Jesus Movement.” Thank you, Sandy, for that beautiful introduction. Thank you Bishop Curry for your inspiration and leadership, and Dr. Gortner for transforming notions of evangelism for me and for all of us!

So in these next 30 minutes we're going to talk about something I call Practicing Resurrection – a combination of 3J's: Jesus, Justice, and Jubilee; a spiritual practice of evangelism that's rooted in a verse from Paul's 2nd letter to Timothy: “God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and love and of self-discipline.” (2 Timothy 1:7)

I want to tell you the story of one of the most foundational experiences of transformation in my life. It started Saturday, August 26, 2006. I was sitting in a pew at Sacred Heart Catholic Church on the Westside of Jacksonville for a citywide scripture study with my daughter who, by the way, had just come home from the College of Charleston. The part of the bible study that the dean of our cathedral [Edward Harrison] was leading talked about one of the great problems of history: that concepts of love and power have been considered polar opposites. He quoted The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. saying, “What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic.”¹ What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic; think about that...sentimental and anemic...

The phrase haunted me until one evening a year or so later when I witnessed the reconciliation of those concepts - power and love, love and power. I'd arrived late at St. Paul AME church because the parking lot was packed. There were over a thousand people from 30 different congregations...the single most diverse group and fully alive group of people I'd ever seen in my entire life. They were singing and praying. There absolutely was POWER in that room, and there was no mistaking, it came from LOVE. They were using the Power of their Love to UNITE [*as the pastor of Mother Emmanuel AME called us to do last night*] with one voice so that the powers that be would take action ...action that would

¹ King, Martin Luther, Jr. “Where Do We Go From Here?” Speech delivered at the 11th Annual Southern Christian Leadership Conference. (Atlanta, Georgia, 16 August 1967).

transform the fate of thousands of at-risk children...and they did it!

I turned to a tall, burly man standing beside me that I'd never met before and with tears in my eyes said, "I think I've just seen the kingdom of God."

That man I later discovered was the new pastor in town of Greater Payne AME Church named Tan Moss. We became trusted colleagues and friends after that transforming experience. And this is Pastor Moss you see pictured on the front page of local news a couple years later.²



Our churches - together with those 30 others – went on to work together to give the city of Jacksonville a chance to LIVE their faith as the paper described it! This, my friends, is a picture of my dream come true for the church...and for evangelism!

Not only had my heart been strangely warmed in that AME church - I was absolutely hooked, and my desire was growing for messages of Good News - of changing the unnecessary suffering and nightmare that the world so often is [*as our Presiding Bishop so aptly describes*] that we hear about daily in the news. I wanted more and more of the Episcopal Church – all of us, everywhere – to have this kind of ministry! So after twenty years I left parish ministry so I could be part of teaching the next generation of lay and ordained leaders in one of our seminaries.

² You can read the full news article here: <http://jacksonville.com/news/metro/2010-03-23/story/interfaith-group-offers-participants-chance-live-faith>

II. Jesus

So let's talk about the first J: JESUS

I fell in love with Jesus because he showed me God's heart of compassion! And that's the point, isn't it? It's all about love. Jesus has been the Way for us to know love like no thing and no one else in human history. But sometimes we miss the full extent of Jesus's compassion.

Let me just read something for you from Matthew's gospel, chapter 9, verses 35 and 36.

"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them..."

Did you hear that? He was teaching school, he was preaching and healing this person and that, but he didn't stop there. He saw the CROWDS...and had compassion for them too. Loving compassionately.... Jesus sees people as not only individuals, but the crowd they are a part of as well. What is the crowd? The crowd is the body of Christ.

We talk about privilege. We'll, privilege is getting to choose which burdens we are willing to carry. Most of us can choose which specific burdens we are willing to take on. But, for those being crushed under the burden of ineffective systems, there is no such privilege. ³

- I've never missed a single paycheck working for Episcopal Churches for the past 25 years...so I never have to deal with U.S. Department of Labor regulations that aren't always enforced to ensure the fair payment of wages. Does that mean I don't bear the burden of those people who do?
- I have two amazing children that were healthy and thriving and newborns in their first days on earth... so I never have to deal with a health care system that may be undermining the survival of other infants in my community. Does that mean I don't bear the burden of those mothers who do?
- I was born into a family with enough resources to help me out during hard times in life, supporting me until I could get back on my feet again ... so I never have deal with payday lending institutions that can bury me under 780 percent annual interest rates. Does that mean I don't bear the burden of others who do?

As we learn to bear one another's burdens our hearts are drawn even deeper into compassion when we realize those in the crowds who *are* being crushed under their burdens are not just our neighbor, or even our brothers or sisters, they are our hand or our foot, a member of our own body; we are members together of the same body.

³ Salvatierra, Alexia. "Being the Body of Christ: Creating Diverse Teams that Work" Presentation hosted by the Leadership Development Initiative via WebEx. (1 December 2014).

You remember Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth was all about the idea that you can't separate the individual part from the whole. Remember those few verses from chapter 12?

¹⁴ For, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.

The Body of Christ is not only made of up many parts, but also of many systems: feet and hands, ears and eyes, as well as the nervous and circulatory system, the skeletal and cardiovascular system. We all live within systems: our family system, our churches, schools, and civic institutions. And Jesus' compassion means bearing one another's burdens [*Galatians 6:2*], even the burdens of the crowds and the systems that are a part of our Body.

There was a disease in Jesus' day that I think is a good metaphor for us: Leprosy. The thing about leprosy is that it is a disease in which the most difficult symptom, they say, is that you don't feel the pain in your extremities. Jesus healed so many lepers, I believe, because his body on earth has leprosy.⁴ We don't feel the pain in our own Body.

When there's a hurting crowd, even if they're in our extremities, then we are all hurting. I don't know what wakes you up at 3:00 a.m. in the morning. I know whose pain is closest to your heart. And I don't live in your part of South Carolina...but we have got to ask ourselves who it is in our lives we need to see with Jesus' heart of compassion...Whose unnecessary suffering, whose burdens, break your heart? And who is the crowd that person is part of, what is the larger system they're part of?

As the body of Christ on earth today, we live with the pain of the crowds, the whole Body of God's people, whether we consciously feel it or not. Jesus' heart of compassion will always be about reconnecting us to the pain in any part of our very Body, bearing the painful burdens of others...the crowds. There is no member and no crowd to whom we get to say, "We have no need of you."

Wherever the Church is fully alive, we will be living, we will be incarnating Good News that, "God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather... a spirit of love ..." (2 Timothy 1:7)

III. Justice

I'll be honest with you. I know that even the most compassionate Jesus followers among us can start to "shut down" as soon as we hear someone is going to talk to us about Justice.

I want us to get un-stuck, get over it, and be a church re-thinking justice so we can be free.... free to follow Jesus whole heartedly, as Micah, one of the prophets who passed him the baton in this movement said, "doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God."

⁴ Ibid.

The main thing – the thing that Jesus got angry about when the religions system didn't live – is in Matthew's gospel, chapter 23, verse 23, when Jesus says,

²³ *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others.”*

As we think about our message, our evangelism for the future, our children are not going to stand in line to re-arrange the spice cabinet. [Following up on Dr. Gortner's analogy for the experience of good news being like that of the restaurant in town with the best meal you've eaten lately.] They want the main thing, the main course meal of justice and mercy and faithfulness!

And Jesus not only prayed and proclaimed the Good News; he *practiced it*. He didn't just talk the talk ...He walked the walk. That's the key to the kingdom... that's what the people I adore in the generations that come after me, my children and theirs, are going to follow...not a church just because it's "church"...but a church that is part of the just Jesus movement.

Being part of the Jesus movement involves sharing a message that we not only proclaim and pray, but that *we practice* - live out. But we have three demons we're going to have to get off our backs before we can pour our hearts into doing justice the Jesus way:

1. Hopelessness (losing hope)
2. Demonizing justice itself, and
3. Reclaiming our God-given, Christ-honoring, Spirit-driven power

1. 1st Demon: Hopelessness

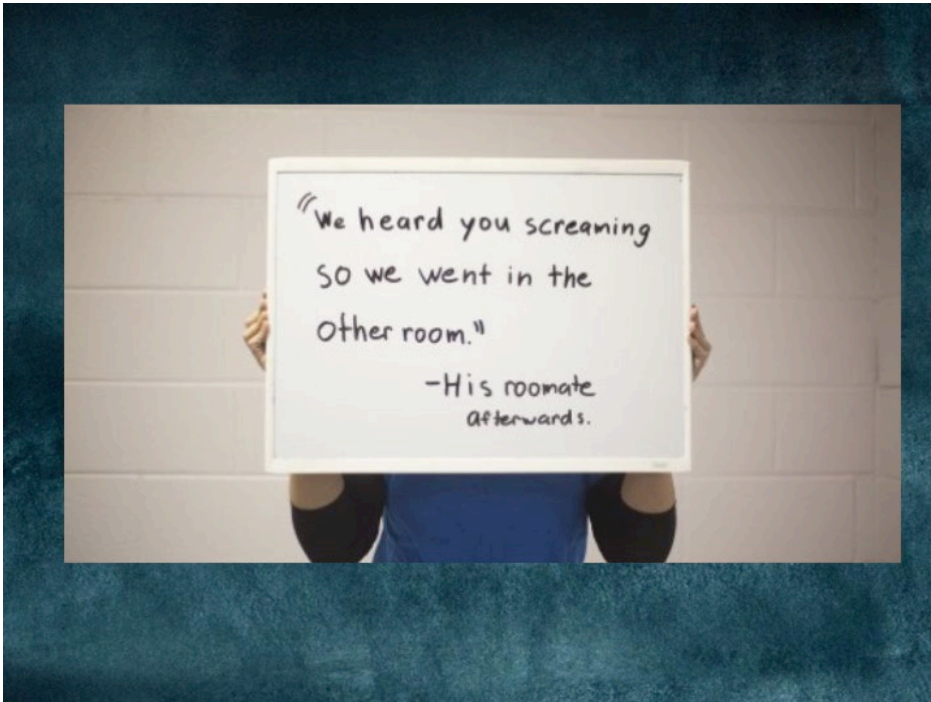
Whether it's our compassion fatigue or simply giving up hope, I think it's easy for us to deaden the overwhelming pain in parts of problems like war, racism, extreme poverty, so we numb ourselves to that part of our body...like Scarlett O'Hara...we shove it down...and say, "I'll think about that tomorrow..."

I shared my dream for the church, but do you want a glimpse of my nightmare for the church?

It happened last year at the seminary, which is right in the middle of a college campus at the University of South. Faculty, staff, students alike...we all started getting emails in our inbox – sometimes weekly - with a message in the subject line that read: "Timely Warning: Report of Sexual Assault on Campus." We would see them, but we didn't know what we could do...and so...we did nothing...we'd delete them.

Then the students in my "Transforming Congregations & Communities" class came across a Facebook post and we saw this picture of a woman holding a sign about what a college student had said to her after she was assaulted.⁵

⁵You can read about the healing project the sign is part of here: <http://project-unbreakable.org/>



“We heard you screaming so we went in the other room.” – *His roommate afterwards*
We *heard* you screaming...so we went *in the other room*...And that’s when I got mad.

The class decided they’ didn’t want to be that kind of church. What kind of witness were we to the world of loving with Jesus’ heart of compassion by doing nothing?

They organized ...and starting this week the seminary is part of the university’s Bystander Intervention program that’s becoming the standard for preventing these assaults before they happen! Students hear the screaming and they *go into* the other room to *prevent that pain before it’s too late*.

Justice is simply holding fast to the hope that, with God’s help, we can make a difference!

2. 2nd Demon: We have got to stop demonizing justice itself!

As soon as I hear you preach to me about Justice, then I start hearing, “Oh, You’re going to tell me what I’m doing wrong and what the right answer is - which may or may not be what I think the right answer is!” We all start jumping to conclusions, feeling shamed or guilty, and end up thinking the one who brought it all up to start with is pretty self-righteous to think he’s got it all figured out.

So let’s just be clear – Justice is not about me – it’s about God!

Let’s re-think this thing. Let’s write another narrative for Justice. If it’s not about my having

the right answer and getting you to see it and do it too, then what is it, really?

Justice is discerning what God wants and needs to happen. It's when God's people listen to each other and learn, when we pray and connect with God and each other, when we weep and wrestle with it enough to sense the rightness of a path. God gives us each a piece of the puzzle – and we each have got to bring our piece to the table if we're ever going to see God's dream of justice materialize.

We have to take the time and have enough Love for this to happen.... and this is just what I've experienced in justice ministry that's based in the Love of God through congregations of all sizes and colors and theologies.

3. Finally...our 3rd demon!

There's a word that we are afraid of.... Do you know what it is? It's hard to say out loud sometimes in the polite company of church folk.... It's power.

What about POWER? Are we allowed to have power? ...to seek to be powerful?

Power is quite literally and simply the capacity, ability, and willingness to act.

The word power occurs 460 times in Scripture, and power is lauded a whole lot more often than many other things, like humility, which only occurs 19 times. I think it's about time that the Episcopal Church is as familiar with the words of our Lord in Acts as we are with the words of Lord Acton. When ever power comes up, Lord Acton is much more likely to be quoted, saying, "Power corrupts and absolutely power...corrupts absolutely," than Jesus who to told his followers, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth!"⁶

We have got to talk about power and get back to our biblical roots for understanding and using power.

Within a biblical framework... all power comes from God. And God chooses to share power with us. Our only legitimate power comes from our relationship with God. We are children of a powerful God, in whose image we are created. And just like Love...Power is meant to flow out into the world through us – for God's purposes!

If you have children, or a beloved friend...or even a pet you adore...you know what it means to love them... But if I don't have the means, the capacity, the ability to keep them safe, to feed them, clothe them, give them a chance to thrive in this world...that's just not enough! I am not content to be a sentimental and anemic mother! I want enough power behind my love, enough of God's power to flow through me to them and to their world around them, to be effective in my loving.

And that means we're going to have to let down our barriers, and get uncomfortable, and practice a spirituality that loves powerfully enough to see injustice and be willing

⁶ Engh, Susan. "Emboldened and Empowered." (Lutheran Women Today, March 2009).

and able to DO something about it!

Our power is God-given, Christ honoring and Spirit-driven.... Our power is for change – for the transformation of the world as it is into the world God intends for it to be. “God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power...” (2 Timothy 1:7)

IV. **Jubilee**

The 2 J's – Jesus and Justice need one more thing to complete the Good News we need and the world is dying to hear and see lived. Our word “Jubilee” comes from the Hebrew for "ram's horn," which was blown to proclaim the beginning of a special time. The Old Testament year of Jubilee was the 50th year, the seventh Sabbath year.

- Jubilee was the time when debts were forgiven, instead of when 780% interest was charged
- Jubilee was when Hebrew slaves were set free, when they didn't have to fight to get paid the wages they were due
- Jubilee was when lands were returned to their former owners, when children could thrive in the land, in whatever zip code they were born!

Jubilee was when the religious and economic and political systems were “re-booted,” so to speak, and re-aligned with God's intentions for blessings. Remember that's what Jesus said he came for in chapter 4 of Luke's gospel, to proclaim the Year of the Lord's favor, the Jubilee!

Justice can never be complete without the discipline of Jubilee, without times set aside for engaging an intentional, ongoing, plan with accountability for accomplishing it. The love of Jesus and Justice requires engaging the crowds and the systems of God's Body on earth to for special occasions, certain times, when we clear the way for God's blessing to reach the entire community.

In our baptismal promises we renounce “the evil powers of this world that corrupt and destroy the creatures of God.” But I'm not so sure we've carefully thought through a plan for doing that. But Scriptures describe that the ancient Israelites knew that God had a plan – and it had a name - They called it Jubilee.

On that horrific morning following the night of June 17th last year, when 9 people were killed during bible study at Mother Emanuel AME church down the street from here, I was with Pastor Chris Battle of Tabernacle Baptist Church with 24 other clergy from around Knoxville who were exploring the possibility of starting a justice ministry like the one I had been a part of in Jacksonville. We were all still in shock...and we started in on our bible study.

Pastor Battle reminded us about the scripture in Deuteronomy (16:20) where Moses giving final instructions to God's people before they enter into the Promised Land: “Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the Lord your God is giving you.”

He said, “Is this putting forward the idea that our neglect of practicing justice leads to our schools which should be places of safety have become shooting galleries....and our churches, which should be places of sanctity have become hunting grounds?” He reminded us that, “We protest reactively, we promote peace after the riots, we walk hand and hand on M. L. King Day. But for an ongoing, consistent systematic approach to the daily injustices we see everyday, we lack miserably...”⁷

In God’s world, Justice and Jubilee go hand in hand.

What I mean when I say that is that is that Jubilee was how God’s people could have an institutionalized expression of those real, lived, moments in time when they could experience the fullness of joy, abundant life, and blessing intended for all through an ongoing, consistent process of ensuring God’s justice would prevail for all.

Through our relationships with others we build power – not for ourselves but for others – for God’s sake! The joy of Jubilee comes through the challenge, and even the failures, of knowing we are continuing to do what God is doing to turn the world right side up again.... just like the early Christian movement was doing when it turned the Roman world upside down!

Now is the time – time to blow that ram’s horn – to call God’s people to develop their muscles of love AND power. It’s time too not only pray and proclaim the Good News, but to dare to practice resurrection....beginning this Easter season...beginning here and now. “God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7)

V. **Practicing Resurrection**

And when all three of those J’s come together...well then that’s what I call practicing resurrection.

Jesus is in the business of redeeming the entire world. And that’s what we get to be part of doing too. We build power together for the sake of love and that is practicing resurrection. Together, we more fully become partners in God’s unfolding promise to mend the entire universe. And that, my friends, is what I’m convinced people are hungry for in our day and time – for Jesus, Justice, and Jubilee.

In our Eucharistic we celebrate that, in Jesus, God has “delivered us from evil...brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.” (*Eucharistic Prayer B*). And wherever the Body of Christ is celebrating on earth today, we are meant to be continuing in that same work of overcoming evil, sin, and death, with God’s help.

Jesus’ resurrection isn’t some spectator sport, where we sit on the sidelines and applaud. It’s about Jesus showing us what we’re meant to be doing too!

⁷ Battle, Christopher. Bible study at the Knoxville Area Justice Ministry Exploratory Clergy Meeting, (18 June 2016).

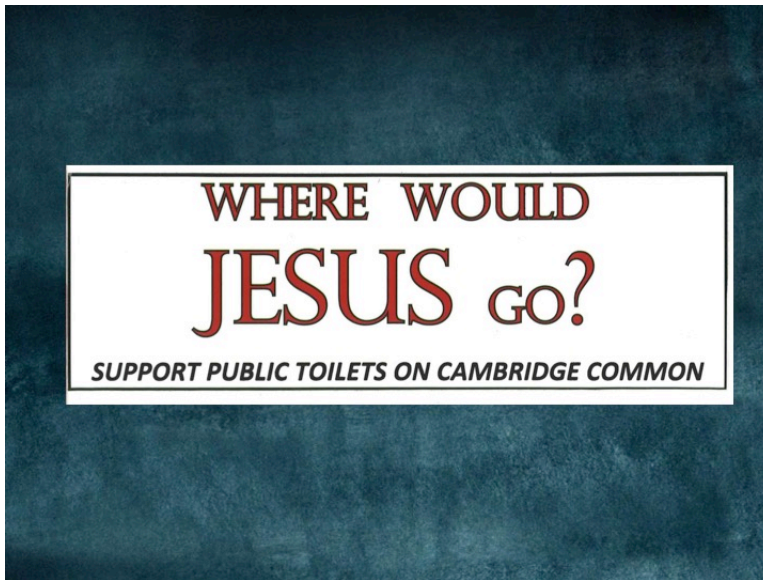
Don't be afraid when the pain of the crowds is felt so deeply in the body of God's people that there's a fierce urgency in the air.

We are a people of hope. And as St. Augustine of Hippo said, "Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are."⁸

In a world full of bad news, we are a people empowered to be holy, whole and bold!

VI. Call to Action

So you can start small where you are ...like Christ Episcopal Church did in a missional project one year recently with their neighborhood in Cambridge Massachusetts. They noticed a situation with the crowd in their community that needed attention. They discovered that there were no public restrooms on Cambridge Commons...for those who were homeless or for anyone else, for that matter...and they made the news in the Boston Globe with their strategy that included these bumper stickers, practicing resurrection to change the city's plans for renovation. They went public with their message with these bumper stickers.⁹



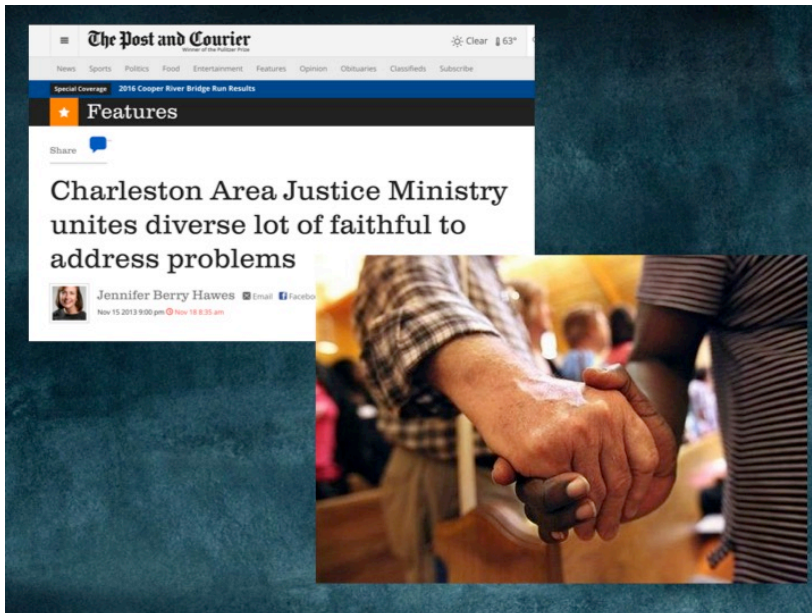
Or show up, like I did, at a Nehemiah Assembly that the Charleston Area Justice Ministry has coming up in a little more than a week at Mt. Moriah Baptist Church on Monday evening, April 18th and share the Good News like The Post & Courier featured as they

⁸ Augustine of Hippo. Quoted in *Spirituality and Liberation: Overcoming the Great Fallacy* (1988) by Robert McAfee Brown, p. 136

⁹ You can read the full news article here:

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2013/09/01/group-seeks-public-toilet-cambridge-common/qqPJ4IwgfxD6EcqS3afY0O/story.html>

practice resurrection.¹⁰



I want us all to have the chance for the world to wake up news like this whole front-page article in living color that I saw in the Florida Times Union the morning of April 12, 2011 that made my heart sing.¹¹



¹⁰ You can learn about the Charleston Area Justice Ministry and upcoming Nehemiah Assembly here: <http://www.charlestonareajusticeministry.org/>

¹¹ You can read the full news article here: http://jacksonville.com/news/metro/2011-04-12/story/icare-churches-unite-tackle-jacksonvilles-social-struggles?page=5&sms_ss=facebook&at_xt=4da46f4997f4100f%2C0

So here's my question to you: What's the good news, you want the world to wake up to?

Use this Easter season to exercise the gift that we can be to this world Practicing Resurrection.

In a public and noticeable way – let the whole world see and know that, “This which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and all things are being brought to their perfection by him through him all things were made!” (Easter Vigil collect)

Because as friends like Stephanie Spellers, our Episcopal Church Missioner for Evangelism and Reconciliation put together for us – there's a great adventure out there when we do our homework for being a missional church, living into the spirituality, evangelism and justice we're all talking about today. A great first step is doing those one-to-ones described on the handout you can pick up along with your lunch in a few minutes.¹²

This week, our seminary dean, Neil Alexander, talked about how the Easter Vigil is celebrated in Jerusalem at Jesus' empty tomb. He said being there for the igniting of the Holy Fire at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was being a part of an unbelievable conflagration! You hear a loud “whoosh!” and see something like this picture as the whole church bursts in to flames, the fire jumping from huge bundles of candles that light thousands of candles virtually all at once in mere seconds.



¹² “Becoming a Missional Church Training” handout can be found on page 14-15 of this PDF.

Teilhard de Chardin said, “The day will come when after harnessing the ether, the winds, the tides, and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that day for the second time in the history of the world, we will have discovered fire.”¹³

The Day of Pentecost is just around the corner...what have we got better to do than to practice resurrection, harnessing the Power of Love, and rediscovering that fire?

That is exactly what I believe people *will* stand in line to be part of in the 21st century!

Practicing Resurrection – a combination of 3J’s: Jesus, Justice, and Jubilee - a spiritual practice of evangelism that can help us be God’s church that does not have a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and love and of discipline. (2 Timothy 1:7)

¹³ Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre. *Toward the Future* [Directions de l'avenir.]. 1 American ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 87-88.

Becoming a Missional Church Training

TOOL #1: THE ONE-TO-ONE RELATIONAL MEETING¹

What is a One-to-One?

The One-to-One relational meeting is an intentional, well-framed conversation between two people. It is the basic building block of all relational (or community) organizing, a potent tool for community formation and movement building. It connects head and heart, motivation (why we act) and strategy (how we act), and requires us to meet The Other with open ears and hearts, sharing and receiving stories of what matters most.

What does a One-to-One Meeting help us to do?

- form relationships
- discover common purpose
- build power
- heal brokenness and overcome resistance
- welcome people from all ends of the spectrum
- discern where the Spirit is moving
- claim our own callings
- identify our own and others' gifts and wisdom
- discern ideas and direction for a new ministry
- get feedback for current or past ministries

What happens in a One-to-One meeting?

The Invitation:

- Offer an honest invitation that expresses your desire to have a mutually enlightening conversation. For example, you might explain, “Our ministry is doing some listening in our neighborhood (or among our allies or with each other). I’d love to hear your story, passions and questions around [fill in blank] and share my own. Could we meet for about 45 minutes soon?”
- In preparation for the meeting, spend time reflecting on your own story: What drives you? What concerns you? What community do you dream of? Review relevant questions on pg. 2 or 3.

The Conversation:

- Two people meet for an agreed upon time – ideally not more than an hour.
- This is **not** surface small talk, pastoral conversation or an interview, with one person speaking and the other listening. Rather, both share stories of the convictions and hopes that drive them.
- The sharing is usually guided by a compelling concern and reflection on specific experiences.
- You may have to go first, to model storytelling and hospitality. Paint a picture and recall specifics.
- The host/initiator asks open questions to help the conversation to go deeper (“Why did you think that?” “How did it make you feel?”). Move from when and who, into how and why.

The Close:

- Be sure to close well and not allow the conversation to drag along.
- Ask for follow-up opportunities: “Is there anyone you think would share this passion or concern?”
- The initiator should also explore next steps: “What could we do together (for God)?”

¹ Get more information about relational organizing, One-to-One meetings and ministry at www.industrialareasfoundation.org, diomassleads.org or download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Adaptations_of_1_To_1s.pdf.

How can my congregation use One-to-Ones?

1. Do One-to-Ones within the church community, in order to ...

- discover shared history, concerns, convictions and passion.
- build trust and pathways for working together and trusting each other.
- identify areas for community transformation, and celebrate what each contributes to that change.

Sample questions within the church:

- Why do you come here? Tell me a time that you felt God really alive in our church.
- What have you loved in this church and in our traditions?
- Tell me about a time that you shared your gifts with our church. A time when you received?
- When have you laughed at church? What was happening?
- When have you seen our church successfully, gracefully handle a challenge? What did you learn?
- When have you seen us fail at something together? What have you learned?
- What changes in our church would concern or even disturb you, and why?
- How has our church shared God's love with our neighborhood? What was good or hard about it?
- How do you wish we could share God's love with our neighborhood in the future? What would we need? What do we already have?

2. Do One-to-Ones with neighbors and people who are not in your church, in order to ...

- discover how your church has related to and been perceived by its neighborhood.
- listen for what your neighbors and potential partners need in order to trust and partner with you.
- discover others' gifts, offer your own, and together imagine ministries that build on those gifts.

Sample questions with neighbors and others:

- Have you ever interacted with our congregation? Share the story of your experience with our church.
- What kind of community do you dream of being part of? Share a story of when you've seen it happen.
- What do you care about and why? Share a story of how you came to care so much.
- What issue keeps you up at night or grieves your heart? Tell the story of why you care.
- What hope makes your heart sing and moves you to act? Tell the story of why you act.
- What have your experiences of church been like?
- What have your experiences of God been like?
- What wisdom and practices in your regular life link you to God? How would you like to share them?
- What ministries or mission could we create or share, together, for the wider community?

3. Do One-to-Ones with partner organizations in your area, in order to ...

- engage group-to-group, leader-to-leader: local bodegas, yoga studios, neighborhood churches, etc.
- link with civic and religious groups representing communities with whom you seek to engage.
- discover ground where you could meet, share commitments and ministry, and build relationship.
- build your capacity to embrace and value the gifts of The Other and grow mutual partnership.

Sample questions with partner organizations:

- Has your group ever interacted with our church? Share the story of your experience with us.
- What do you wish a church would do in this community? Tell a story of when you've seen churches acting as mutual partners and helpful allies?
- What kind of community do you dream of being part of? Share a story of when you've seen it happen.
- When have you seen groups coming together to act on values in a way that made a difference?
- What do you wish our groups could do together (for God)?