

Community Collaboration and Lutheran Identity

Biblical Reflection: Acts 16:10-15

¹⁰When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them. ¹¹We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, ¹²and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. ¹³On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.

What do you notice or wonder about the text that is related to engaging the community?

What might be some takeaways from this text that might provide insight into connecting more fully with your context?

How did Paul and his team listen to how God was guiding?
What was the Spirit doing?

Prayer

How did you first get connected with Jesus, the Gospel, God?

How did you come to be connected with a church, with the church you attend now??
Who invited you or what brought you?

In your perspective, what do people in the community know about your church?
If you interviewed people on the streets, at community meetings, at sport events; what would they say about your church?

What does it mean to you for your church to be a Lutheran presence in the community? And ELCA Lutheran presence?

What is God up to at your church?

What is God up to in your community/context?

It is important to think about these questions before brainstorming ways to interact with the community.

NOW – what does it mean to be a Lutheran Presence?

Lutheran Identity

Adapted from: Lutheran Trump Cards – Playing Our Best Hand in the 21st Century - Daubert

1) We believe we cannot earn, buy, inherit, or deserve God's grace, forgiveness, or presence. It is a gift.
God comes to us. Romans 3:22b-24

2) Jesus shows us that, God loves us no matter what. No greater love than this.
John 15:12-17

3) Grace for us and grace for others. We are not the judge. If God can save us, God can save others. It is not an exclusive club. Eph. 2:8-9

4) All baptized have a vocation in God's kingdom. Service happens in many forms, not just rostered ministers. I Cor. 12:4-11
Rostered ministers are necessary for the order of the church and administration of sacraments, but it is not exclusive. All people have a roll.

5) Life is sacramental. We know God comes to us in bread and wine, water and word. There are many other ways in life God comes to us and reveals God's self to us.
Psalm 104

6) Lutheran Worship is for God and for us. In worship we give thanks to God in many ways and God comes to be with us, empowers us with the sacrament. Jesus really comes to be with us. And sends us out.
Matt 18:15-20

7) The point is not to be perfect, but faithful. We are not preoccupied with trying to be perfect, or at least better than you. We, the imperfect, seek to be faithful. Sin Boldly.

8) All our life and work is a response to God for the life/death/resurrection of Jesus that saves us. We cannot save ourselves.

9) We are evangelical. Which in the true historical sense of the word means we are people of the Word. The word of God is primary in our lives, and the words and deeds of Jesus are of highest priority.

10) We have an ecumenical spirit and heart. We do not believe we are the only faithful church. Jesus says in John 17 that when we work together we show that God sent him into the world.

11) We are a reforming church, which means we embrace change. Not for change sake, but change to keep connected to God and our neighbor through the Gospel in every age.

12) Everyone is welcome. No exceptions. Worship is at God's invitation. Everyone is invited to communion. Baptism is a gift not a test.

Examples and tools for community collaboration

- Listening – a regular pattern of listening to God, each other, and the community
 - Chart community needs. Create asset map to see where community needs match congregational resources and talents
- Visibility in the community
 - Logos, advertising, marketing, word of mouth, presence at community events
 - Pastors and leaders visible in the community
- Hospitality
 - Building use,
- Invitational Christianity
 - Learning to talk about Jesus
 - Elevator speech
- Evangelical Outreach
- 5 Habits of Highly Missional People
- 5 Practices of Fruitful Congregations
- Ways to meet the neighborhood
 - Block parties
 - Walk the streets
- Demographics
- ELCA Priorities for the decade of the 2020's
 - Leadership and vitality
- REVIVE – critical elements of congregational renewal and vitality
 - community collaboration
 - evangelism
 - stewardship
 - contextual worship
 - faith formation
 - leadership development
 - spiritual and faith practices