

The Northwestern Minnesota Synod

Bishop's Letter



This month's
theme:
Summer Worship

May 2008

2008 Synod Assembly
Friday and Saturday, May 16 – 17, 2008
Memorial Auditorium, Concordia College
Moorhead.

Registration
begins at 7
a.m. on
Friday, May 16
with opening
worship
at 9 a.m.

Keynote
Pr. David
Daubert—
*Renewing
the Church
from the
inside out*



Friday, 7:30
*An Evening
Of
Celebration
And Song*
Music by the
Jay Beech
Band

**Saturday,
9 a.m.**
*Revival
Service*
Pr. Kathryn
Love preach-
ing and
presiding

The Bishop's Letter

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Northwestern Minnesota Synod
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Two versions of "Connections" are included in this issue. To conserve paper, we've used one two-sided sheet for both versions. Connections is also available on our website. Please share the information in this newsletter/bulletin insert with your congregation.

UMC implements resolution of full communion with ELCA

The United Methodist Church (UMC) has voted and approved an implementing resolution of full communion with the ELCA at that church's General Conference meeting in Fort Worth, Texas.



According to the terms of the implementing resolution, a relationship of full communion will begin insofar as the ELCA votes favorably for full communion with the UMC. The ELCA Church Council will consider recommending an implementing resolution for full communion with the UMC in the coming months, which would then be passed on to the ELCA Churchwide Assembly for further consideration in 2009.

The UMC and the ELCA entered into a relationship of interim Eucharistic sharing as of the 2005 ELCA Ninth Churchwide Assembly. During this time of interim Eucharistic sharing, both churches have taken opportunities to study documents together, learn and share in each other's traditions, advise and evaluate the possibility of a relationship of full communion, and generally pursue the marks of fellowship that express greater visible Christian unity between these churches in our local, regional and national expressions. Through a period of interim Eucharistic sharing, churches also discern whether to take next steps and vote on a relationship of full communion.

Unlike interim Eucharistic sharing, a relationship of full communion would allow for exchangeability of clergy, among many other benefits to these churches. On the other hand, full communion is not a vehicle for church-to-church merger, or for the imposition of one church's rules and regulations upon the other.

The 2005 vote for interim Eucharistic sharing between the ELCA and the UMC was the culmination of a series of dialogues between Lutherans and Methodists that began in 1977 when the first bilateral round explored the Sacrament of Baptism, and continued since then with significant study of episcopacy and the holy Eucharist.

Healthy Congregations Focus on Mission

By Bishop Larry Wohlrahe

"Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Jesus, paraphrased by Eugene Peterson in *The Message* (Matthew 28:19)

"You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you are going, because you might not get there." Yogi Berra

Congregations are not algae or bacteria. That is to say: congregations are not single-cell creatures, concerned solely with their own survival.

Congregations are marvelous, complex, purposeful living bodies. They're made up of many "cells" (disciples) who invariably want to accomplish more, make something new, and create fresh possibilities. Healthy congregations have a "life force" within them—the Holy Spirit—that frees them to focus on more than individual survival. Unable to help themselves, they simply have to reproduce, propagate, grow. When congregations stop doing these things, they die.

Have you noticed how when a congregation is first created we call it a *mission church*? If you've been part of a mission church you know how exciting that can be—building a congregation from scratch, rounding up seekers, forming community, starting programs and ministries, looking ahead to a first building project. There is also a keen sense of connection with the wider church—both the denomination (which may invest dollars) and neighboring congregations (which may encourage their own members to "seed" the mission church). The atmosphere is "electric" in a mission church.



Then, once the mission church is successfully planted and self-sustaining (*hmmm—is a congregation ever self-sustaining?*) we stop referring to it as a mission church, as if being and remaining a mission church wasn't the goal. Now it's one more "real" congre-

This is the third in a series of articles on the marks of healthy congregations. Bishop Larry encourages congregation councils or other parish leadership groups to use these articles for their opening devotions.

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1. Scripture taken from *The Message*. Copyright 1993, 1994, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.
2. Quoted by Peter Steinke in *Healthy Congregations* training materials, p. 37.

“This is hard work—clarifying and redefining God’s purposes for us...”

gation that has somehow “arrived.” Over time, it may well lose the palpable sense of purpose and vibrant life with which it began. Maintenance of the status quo replaces risk-taking mission, costly service, and imaginative outreach.

What if our synod thought of itself as having 270-plus mission churches? What if we kept calling congregations mission churches for as long as they live? What if we all realized that the only way to survive is to stop focusing on survival only—to turn our churches inside out, giving ourselves away as freely and lavishly as Christ gave himself for all?

Recovering a lively sense of mission is one of our most critical callings in these early years of the 21st century. Realizing that a congregation is more than just a place where religious folks gather to “do their thing,” is crucial. Reorienting ourselves to understand the church as a people sent on a mission is essential.

How does this happen? Often it’s triggered by a crisis or turning point. A tragedy forces us out of familiar patterns. The old ways simply aren’t working any longer. New opportunities rise to meet us.

Recently some of us visited Pelican Rapids, courtesy of Pastor Laurie Skow-Anderson and other leaders at Trinity Lutheran Church. This rural “lakes country” town has been receiving many new immigrants from African and Hispanic cultures, attracted by jobs in a local food processing plant. What might seem like a problem is being perceived as an opportunity to make friends, offer care, and share Christ’s love. Mission questions keep popping up, and missional imagination is causing creative juices to flow. Folks at Trinity and other area churches are pondering what God might be calling them to do with all these new, fascinating neighbors.



It would be a mistake to suggest that “focusing on mission” is a piece of cake. No. This is hard work—clarifying and redefining God’s purposes for us in the thick of cultural transformation. Resistance from lovers of the status quo is real.

It usually helps if we at least take a stab at *stating* what we think our mission might be. A **mission statement** (or **purpose statement**) is simply a way for a congregation to define itself, to articulate its reasons for living and moving and having its being. Lutheran pastor and counselor Peter Steinke likes to say that a good mission statement includes the following elements:

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Roster updates

Prayers and sympathy to:

Pr. Marvin and Catheryn Abrahamson and family in the death of Cathy’s father on April 7 and her brother on April 10. A double funeral was held in San Leandro, CA on April 19. Pastor Abrahamson serves Zion Lutheran Church, Fergus Falls and Hedemarken Lutheran Church, Carlisle.

Pr. Lyle and Linda Hoxtell and family in the death of their daughter, Carissa, on April 19 and also in the death in Lyle’s mother, Dorothy, on March 17. Pastor Hoxtell is a retired pastor living in Fergus Falls.

Pr. Mark and Emily Nerland and family in the death of Mark’s mother, Violet, on April 28. Pastor Nerland serves North Buffalo Lutheran Church, rural Moorhead.

Ordinations

- Pr. Katie Anne Keller Koch, April 12
- Pr. Jo A. Gast, April 20
- Pr. John Ahola, April 26

Installations

- Pr. Katie Keller Koch, pastor, United & Our Savior’s Lutheran Churches, Gatzke, April 19
- Pr. Jo Gast, pastor, Family of God Lutheran Church, East Grand Forks, April 20
- Pr. John Ahola, pastor, Gary & Ness Lutheran Churches, Gary, St. Olaf Lutheran Church, Twin Valley, Faaberg & Sundal Lutheran Churches, Fertile, May 11

End of Call

Pr. George Dahl, pastor, First and Trefoldighed Lutheran Churches, call concluded effective May 15 due to dissolution of parish alignment

Congregation leaving ELCA

11546 East Marsh River Lutheran Church, Halstad, effective February 10

Congregations in Study/Interims/ Seeking Pastors:

Akeley, **First** (part-time), interviewing, interim Pr. Karol Hendricks-McCracken

Alexandria, **First**, 2nd associate pastor, interviewing

Audubon, **First**, interviewing, interim Pr. D. Rolf Aanestad

Roster updates

Barrett, **Peace**, part-time interim contract Prs. Cordell & Mary Carol Strug

Battle Lake, **First**, call concluded due to dissolution of parish alignment

Battle Lake, **Trefoldighed**, call concluded due to dissolution of parish alignment

Blackduck, **Zion**, in self study, interim Pr. Melody Kirkpatrick

Clearbrook, **Good Shepherd and Our Savior's**, pastor resigned, interim Synodically Authorized Minister Michael Sculley

East Grand Forks, **Family of God**, call accepted

Erhard, **Tonseth**, pastor recently resigned

Fergus Falls, **Zion & Hedemarken** (part-time), associate pastor, interviewing

Gatzke, **Our Savior's & United**, call accepted

Halstad, **Halstad & Augustana**, interviewing, interim Pr. Marsha Burt

Hines, **First**, pastor resigned

Kelliher/Waskish, **Bethlehem & Our Savior** (part-time), pastor resigned, interim Associate in Ministry/Synodically Authorized Minister Jill Torgerson

Lake Bronson, **Zion & Kennedy, Maria**, interim resigned

Lake Park, **Cormorant**, ready for nominees, interim Pr. Gary VanHunnik

Lancaster, **Sion**, call out, interim Pr. Mark Rittmann

Lowry, **St. Paul's**, interim, Pr. Sherry Billberg

McIntosh, **Our Savior & Vernes**, call out, interim contract Pr. Aage Carlsen

Milona, **Faith**, interviewing, interim Pr. Donald Reisig.

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Innovation keeps worship strong during summer

*We recently asked pastors/leaders on our email list what new, exciting, unique things does your congregation do to **add** ministries to the summer months?*

Wild Rice Lutheran Parish



Wild Rice Lutheran Parish conducts a three-day, two-night vacation bible school at "The Lake." Every summer, for a few days, one of our members donates their lake front property for the parish to use. Kids, elementary through high school, bring their tents, sleeping bags, and their energy. Adults of our parish donate food, money, ideas, musical talent, patience, and their time to ensure the kids not only have a safe but memorable experience.

There is a theme each year, which is the focus of our bible study and lessons throughout the day. Crafts, swimming, and some kind of service/mission project are also part of the experience. Our parish still supports Pathways both financially and by sending kids. By also holding our own summer camp we have found a way to involve a large number of individuals in sharing their God-given gifts for the sake of God's kingdom. It is really an interesting sight to see.

Chad Peterson

Wild Rice Lutheran Parish, Twin Valley

Shalom Lutheran, Alexandria

For the past 14 years I have offered a "change of pace" in my preaching during the summer by doing "interactive sermons." I give an introduction and conclude with some kind of gospel proclamation. In between I ask the congregation to respond to the teachings of Jesus and the questions raised by the Gospel text. Not everyone is comfortable expressing their thoughts in a public worship setting, but (surprisingly!) many are, and the rest are clearly thinking about how they would answer the questions.

When people come to their own conclusions and insights, the lesson is truly learned. The lectionary for the summer tends to be parables and teachings of Jesus, which lend themselves well to interactive "teaching" sermons. Preaching in this style requires trust that the Holy Spirit works throughout the community of Christ as well as through the pastor.

Pastor Grant Aaseng

Shalom Lutheran Church, Alexandria

Cormorant Lutheran, Pelican Rapids

Summer is always hopping in the lakes country and at Cormorant Lutheran Church. The theme for summer '08 at Cormorant Lu-

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Summer worship... Continued

theran Church is “Listen, God is Calling.” This is appropriate as a call committee will be working to discern God’s call of a pastor for our congregation.



Again this summer, our second service will be moving outside. The first service will be inside our beautiful facility and then the popular outdoor service as we sit on blankets or on lawn chairs. There will be different music groups from the area each week to bring their unique gifts and talents to our outdoor worship experience. The first service is at 8:30 a.m. and the outdoor service is at 10 a.m. starting May 25 and running throughout the summer through September 7. Come and join your lake neighbors and friends in worship.

The famous Cormorant Lutheran Auction will be held Saturday, June 28. This is a great time for the whole community to gather to visit and bid on some great deals. Auctions are an exciting gathering time and we always have many special items available on the auction. Besides, the proceeds go to support the ongoing ministry of this congregation.



In addition to the Sunday morning services, Cormorant Lutheran is adding one vespers service per month. The evening vespers service will be hosted at an area lake and will be held on pontoons or around a campfire. Check the web page (www.cormorantlutheran.org) for further information on these and many more worship and program updates for the summer.
Gary Van Hunnik, interim pastor

Trinity Lutheran, Pelican Rapids

As part of its Christian Outreach, Trinity Lutheran, Pelican Rapids, began a free family outdoor concert last summer. This summer, the event will be held Saturday, July 19, 5-10:30 p.m. Concert headliners include Freddie Colloca, Mandisa and “Heart of the City.”

Trinity has also initiated a Spanish/English worship service in the park. “About 70 people attended our first worship in the park,”

The Northwestern Minnesota Bishop’s Letter

Continuing education opportunities with CHARIS

June 16-19, 2008

“Leading from Within: The Spirituality of Leadership” with Roy Oswald

Starts June 16 at 10 a.m. and ends June 19, noon, at the Park Region Lounge in Park Region Hall, Concordia College. Cost: \$439; fee includes breaks only. Early Bird Discount (if paid in full by May 30) \$40 off. On-campus room and/or board available on request. CEUs: 2 (= 20 contact hours) - \$5 admin fee.

June 24-25, 2008

“Leading Change and Living to Tell About It” with Anthony B. Robinson

The focus of this workshop is to explore such transformational leadership—and survive to tell about it.

Starts June 24 from 10 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.; June 25, 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at Jones Conference Room in the Student Center at Concordia College. Cost: \$299; fee includes breaks only. Early Bird Discount (if paid in full by June 6) \$30 off. On-campus room and/or board available on request. CEUs: 1.1 (= 11 contact hours) - \$5 admin fee

July 21, 2008

Skill Enhancement Workshop for Church Secretaries and Office Staff

There will be three ‘breakout’ sessions, with workshops on computer security, church security, church newsletters and bulletins, website (an overview), archives, office communication, and a motivational workshop. The fee for the day is \$85, which includes lunch and breaks.

For more information on these seminar/workshops, contact Jacki Knapp-Raaen, Coordinator, CHARIS Ecumenical Center, Concordia College, 218.299.3566 or knappraa@cord.edu.

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Lutheran Outdoor Ministry Camps launch new summer choral camps

A new pilot junior high choral camp program will be offered at three Lutheran camps this summer:

- Green Lake Lutheran Ministries in Spicer, Minn., July 27-August 2
- Luther Crest Bible Camp in Alexandria, Minn., August 3-8
- Luther Park Bible Camp in Danbury, Wis., August 12-17

The music camps are designed for area youth in grades 6-8 who are interested in singing and learning more about choral music. Lutheran Music Program (LMP) will provide a conductor and a team of choral faculty to deliver musical instruction for the camp. This summer's conductor is Zebulon M. "Zeb" Highben who serves as Choirmaster and Associate Musician at Westwood Lutheran Church (St. Louis Park, Minnesota).

Once the 2008 pilot is complete, it is LMP's hope that the partnership will expand to include more Outdoor Ministry camps and other music ministries. For more information on this exciting new program, contact Sue Olstad at solstad@lutheransummermusic.org or 612.230.3291.

Roster updates...

Moorhead, **Bethesda**, ready for nominees, interim Pr. Cheryl Berg

Moorhead, **Concordia College**, campus pastor, call offered to and accepted by Reverend Tessa Moon Leiseth.

Moorhead, **Our Savior's**, interviewing for senior pastor, interim Pr. Glenn Leaf

New York Mills, **St. Peter's Evangelical**, interviewing, interim Pr. Philip Johnson

Park Rapids, **Calvary**, senior and associate pastors resigned, interims Pr. Kathryn Rothman and Pr. Kenneth Nyhusmoen

Parkers Prairie, **Esther** (part-time), ready for nominees, interim Pr. Donald Reisig

Synodical Women to hold annual convention June 6-7

The 21st Annual Convention of the Northwestern Minnesota Synodical Women's Organization will be held June 6 & 7 at Our Savior Lutheran Church, East Grand Forks, Minn.

The theme, "Do Justice, Love Kindness, Walk Humbly with God" comes from Micah 6:8. The banquet and business session, which will include election of officers and budget approval, will be Friday evening. Charlene Spillmann, Executive Board Member from Texas will be on hand for the two days. Entertainment will be the Trinity Trio from Thief River Falls. The Trinity Trio is a gospel group whose repertoire includes both old-time gospel and traditional music. The group includes a banjo, guitar, bass, viola, mandolin, and tin whistle.

Saturday morning, June 7, will begin with a worship service with Holy Communion lead by Bishop Wohlrabe. The main speaker for the convention is Patricia Lorenz, well-known for her "Chicken Soup for the Soul" books. She has spoken throughout the United States on many subjects and links them to our spiritual life as well. She will be presenting Friday as well as Saturday with her books for signing and visiting with convention goers. Also, in closing on Saturday, Lena and Inga will present their "Lutheran Legalities," the Norwegian version.



News from the Mission Investment Fund

Currently MIF is offering an 18 month Mission Term Select account that will offer a 4.6% return on a minimum \$2,500 deposit. This new offering is only for new deposits and not for transfer of funds already on deposit with MIF. This offer may end at any time. Other accounts are also available. MIF offers MissionTerm-Select accounts with maturity dates ranging from 1 to 7 years with a \$100 minimum deposit. Currently the 4 year fixed is yielding 5.61% (APY). Mission Plus (demand account) is also offered, with check book availability.

For more information on the 18-month MissionTermSelect visit our website, www.missioninvestmentfund.org or contact Pr. Dan Carlson: 651-649-0454- ext 223 or Daniel.Carlson@elca.org. For building and capital needs concerns contact building consultant Phil Roe: Philip.Roe@elca.org or 651-649-0454- ext. 225.

Immanuel Lutheran's Miracle Sunday serves dual needs

By Michael Stein

How does a church roof in Wadena relate to a housing shortage in Jerusalem? Immanuel Lutheran found a creative way to take two needs and combine them into one fundraising project. The story began with one of those incredibly strong winds that blow through the state every ten years or so.

"The wind did severe damage to our sanctuary roof," said Pastor Rob Nelson. "We decided to install a metal roof to prevent future damage. While this was going on, we had a member notice that our budget was down half a percent in total mission support and hoped we weren't trying to balance our budget by reducing mission support. We talked about the two needs and decided to raise \$20,000 for the roof and come up with a mission project."

While attending meetings sponsored by churchwide, Rob heard Rev. Twila Schock, (director for Global Mission Support) do moments for mission, which included information about the Mount of Olives Housing project. As an ELCA program director, Pastor Chick Lane (a member at



Image from the Mount of Olives Housing Project.

Immanuel) was also aware of the project. "Chick and I talked about the project and brought it to our council," Rob explained. "The council liked what they heard and we decided that the dollars given would be equally divided with an overall goal of \$40,000."

April 20 was designated as "Miracle Sunday" with a processional offering. With economic stimulus checks scheduled to arrive in May, it was decided to give members through June to pledge. On April 13, Schock preached and led an adult forum about the Mount of Olives project. From this foundation, the members came through, and nearly reached the goal on Miracle Sunday. Ensuing pledges and contributions pushed them over the top.

"We've gone beyond our goal with \$40,645," Rob said on April 25. "About \$5,000 of that is in pledges, the rest in hard cash. I understand that when our members make a pledge, they stick to it. They really showed their concern and interest in mission. They definitely rose to the occasion."

"Immanuel has a strong history of mission involvement, locally and globally," said member Susan Thompson. "Plus, we are a strong congregation in synod benevolence. But even with our positive mission history, this was a bit of a risky venture that had a very exciting outcome. Perhaps it will encourage others who might want to 'dare' try something bold in mission outreach."

Preaching on Miracle Sunday, Rob quoted from the hymn that proclaims we are all one in mission. He added, "If we do a similar event next year, I will sing it—and that will be a miracle!"

Augsburg College Summer Theology Institute

Augsburg College asks pastors and other church professionals to nominate youth completing 10-12th grades who demonstrate theological capability to attend the Augsburg College Youth Theology Institute at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, June 15-20, 2008. The registration fee is \$100. That \$100 will cover housing, all meals, and all programming for the Institute. Augsburg College and a grant from the Lilly Endowment will cover all other expenses for the week.

During the week, participants will receive theological education on the theme "Why Christian: Claiming Our Faith in an Age of Pluralism." Participants will study the book *Why Christian: For Those on the Edge of Faith* by Douglas John Hall. For more information, please contact Ross Murray, Augsburg College Youth Theology Institute Program Director at 612-330-1151 or murray@augsb.org.

Roster updates...

Pelican Rapids, **Grove Lake**, pastor recently retired, interim Pr. Darrel Saathoff

Roseau, **Bethel, First Evangelical** (part-time), contract services Pr. Kristin Ostercamp

Roseau, **First of Salol** (part-time), Synodically Authorized Minister Bonnie Nordvall

Turtle River, **New Salem**, pastor recently resigned, interim Pr. William Beyer

Ulen, **Bethlehem**, call out, interim Pr. John Martinson

Wadena, **Immanuel**, interviewing for associate pastor; part-time interim Pr. Steven Dahl

Warren, **First & Immanuel**, pastor recently resigned

Minnesota Lutherhostel

Lutheran Summer Music (LSM) and Association of Lutheran Older Adults (ALOA) will offer the Minnesota Lutherhostel, a five-day musical feast, at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn., July 16-20, 2008. For more information about this event, contact Walt Schmidt, 623-937-8835 or walt-lois@cox.net

Theology of Christian Worship Conference

The Theology of Christian Worship Conference will be held June 22-23, 2008, at Luther Seminary.

Keynote Speakers: Frank C. Senn, John T. Pless, Walter Sundberg. Also engaging workshops and inspiring music. Sponsored by Re-Claim Resources for Lutherans. For more information, go to www.ReClaimLutheranWorship.org.

Lutheran World Relief Drives

Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota will collect quilts and kits at LSS, 1325 11th St. S., Fargo, May 19-23 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you have questions contact Ashley Kallod of Lutheran Disaster Response/LSS at 701-271-3288.

Rural Churches: Ecumenical Community Service and Ministry

May 14 & 15 in Paynesville, Minn., or May 21 & 22 in Madelia, Minn.

Pastors and church leadership are encouraged to attend a 2-day workshop designed to energize ecumenical work to meet community needs through shared service and ministry. Please tell member churches in your judiciary. For more information contact Lynne Holman at (612) 230-3211.

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available on our
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Summer worship... Continued from page 5



Worshippers at a Trinity outdoor service last summer.

said Pastor Laurie Skow-Anderson. "We're taking baby steps with this ministry, but it's moving forward."

Located in the heart of lake country, Trinity ratchets up its summer worship programs as the lake season heats up. And speaking of heat, "It was big news for us when we installed air conditioning last summer," Laurie said. "Not having it tends to keep people away."

Bishop's message, continued from page 3

"Poke, prod and revise (your mission statement) regularly"

- Is no more than a single sentence in length
- Is easily understood by a 12-year-old
- Can be recited from memory *at gunpoint!*

Such a mission statement can be "confessed" regularly (in worship and other places), even as it guides the leaders of a congregation in making choices and establishing priorities for the coming years.

Please consider your congregation's mission or purpose statement a *working document*, though. Poke, prod and revise it regularly. It will change as surely as your mission will change in this constantly-changing world. If you'd like to help your congregation get in touch with its mission or purpose, please take a look at a book, *Living Lutheran: Renewing Your Congregation* (2007, Augsburg Fortress), written by Pastor David Daubert, who will be one of our major presenters at synod assembly, May 16-17 at Concordia College.

Your partner in God's mission, Bishop Larry Wohlrabe

Questions for reflection and discussion:

1. What are some ways God has been turning your congregation inside-out for the sake of others?
2. When did your congregation experience a crisis or turning point that led you to take another look at your purpose for existing as a church?
3. Can disciples in your congregation articulate your purpose or mission in a single, understandable, memorable sentence? How could you help your congregation to define its purpose or mission?