

Go and...!

Notes from 8/25/2022 Gathering on Zoom – 23 participants

Planning Team: Pastor Judy Anderson, Pastor Jay Berry, Pastor Jill Collict, Pastor Maristela Freiberg, Pastor Danielle McCleary, Pastor Courtney Smith, and Pastor Dianne Lewis

Theme: Go and Do Likewise

Welcome and Prayer: Rev. Courtney Smith

“It Couldn’t Be Done” poem by Edgar A. Guest

Somebody said that it couldn’t be done,
But he with a chuckle replied
That “maybe it couldn’t,” but he would be one
Who wouldn’t say so till he’d tried.
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin
On his face. If he worried he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn’t be done, and he did it.
Somebody scoffed: “Oh, you’ll never do that
At least no one ever has done it”;
But he took off his coat and he took off his hat,
And the first thing we knew he’d begun it.
With a lift of his chin and bit of a grin,
Without any doubting or quiddit,
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
That couldn’t be done, and he did it.
There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,
There are thousands to prophesy failure;
There are thousands to point out to you one by one,
The dangers that wait to assail you.
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,
Just take off your coat and go to it;
Just start to sing as you tackle the thing
That “cannot be done,” and you’ll do it.

As you go out in the world to “go and do likewise” put faith in God and don’t let anyone tell you “it can’t be done,” because with God all things are possible!

Dwelling in the World – Rev. Jay Berry

This simple practice helps us reflect on God’s movement in our daily lives.

1. Reflect: sit in silence for several minutes reflecting back on the previous week. When was there a time when you had an opportunity to share God’s peace with someone? What might God have been up to in that encounter? If you were to reconnect with that person, what might God want to do?
2. Share and Listen: find a partner and spend several minutes sharing your story and reflections

3. Regather and Listen: As a large group, share highlights of your stories, wonderings, or reflections

Breakout rooms for discussion

Large group reflections contemplating “what was God up to?”

- Reconnecting community to avid feelings of isolation and disconnect, especially those recently retired
- Providing blessings to anything and everything for relationship building
 - o Story shared about blessing a woman’s house
- Encouraging conversation for the benefit of others around challenging topics such as mental health

Rev. José Escalera, Misión Luterana Reconciliación & Temple Lutheran Church in Pennsauken

- Background: graduate of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary), originally from Puerto Rico but moved to the USA in 2019 to serve in these two congregations
- After starting in new church – went to the supermarket to conduct a survey asking:
 - o Do you know Temple Lutheran Church?
 - o What do you know Temple Lutheran Church for?
 - o What do you know about the Lutheran church?
- Survey showed that the worshipping community was seen as a “food bank with a church” instead of a “church with a food bank.”
 - o People knew more about the Pentecostal church using Temple’s building than they did about the Lutheran church
- Started handing out flyers to help change the perspective and create understanding of what Temple Lutheran Church is and what they believe
- Connected with local police and fire departments to do drive throughs of neighborhoods to get to know the area and the people
- Offered house blessings
- Recognized that the community was transient due to the high cost of living and began to understand the ways the community was suspicious of institutions and gained awareness that the church is an institution people are suspicious of
- Ministry practice: sitting at a coffee shop with a sign that says “Coffee and Prayer”
 - o Opportunity for relationship building
 - o Took time, but routinely showing up helped create understanding and community

Rev. Erich Kussman, St. Bartholomew Lutheran Church in Trenton

- Background: New Jersey born and raised, served 12 years in prison and got his GED, then got a B.A. in Biblical Studies and his M.Div from Princeton
 - o Served as the Vicar and was then called as the Pastor
- Trenton used to have 13 churches but today only has 2
 - o Lutherans moved out to the suburbs and took their money with them
 - o There are lots of people worshipping in Trenton but there’s not a lot of money
- Hosted his office outside the church building so people could see the church was open and talk to people walking by
 - o People said “we didn’t realize this place was open”

- Identified the need for a community food pantry that now serves over 300 families weekly
- Financial giving tanked during COVID, in-person attendance dropped (most people are online) and they shifted to putting all efforts into their feeding ministry
 - o Opportunity to get to know the community and learn their stories
 - o Learned how people viewed the church with a negative lens
 - o People thought the church collected money just so the pastor could live a fancy lifestyle – continues to try and change that understanding and perspective
 - This is not the way for Lutherans
 - o “I know you because I see God in you”
- People want to see your faith in action, that you practice what you preach and mean it
- God is love. God can be trusted. We need to teach that and take back the narrative society has corrupted about God and our faith
 - o It starts by listening
- Some of the best ministry is happening in the cities, the places with the least amount of funding

Mark 2:22 “you can’t put new wine in old wineskins”

- Both Rev. Kussman and Rev. Escalera shared this Bible verse as a way to reflect on our mission and what God is calling us to do
- God is doing new things, are we keeping up?

Dwelling in the Word: Luke 10: 25-37 The Good Samaritan

Reflection from Martin Luther King Jr: In his famous “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech, delivered the night before he was assassinated, Dr. King returns to the dangers of that Jericho Road. He speculates that the two religious leaders were probably asking the question “If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?” They were scared. But the Good Samaritan reversed the question: **“If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?”**

Breakout Room Discussion: What is God inviting us through this text to practice at God’s Work Our Hands Sunday?

- Making school kits
- Making dog toys for shelter
- Painting positivity rocks
- Care packages
- Food pantry and meal ministries

Resources:

- God’s Work Our Hands Sunday <https://elca.org/gwoh>
- Resources for GWOH Sunday: <https://elca.org/Resources/GWOH-Sunday>

We need your help!

- In October, November, and December we are looking for people who are interested in sharing what they did or learned based on this Go And...! journey experience. Please let us know if you are interested in sharing.

Closing Prayer: Rev. Judy Anderson

Holy One, may we learn to trust your Son who carries us. May we learn to trust your Spirit where ever it leads us. Grant us grace to lean on your gift of faith which you have given us. Help us to learn and understand the mystery of your commandment to love - where love of you and love of neighbor become one. Jesus, teach us your ways of love and charity. We pray this through Jesus Christ our Lord, with the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

See You Next Month!
September 29th at 7:00 pm, est.