

Go and...!

Notes from 6/30/2022 Gathering on Zoom – 30 participants on screen with the addition of at least 2 cats and 4 dogs (All God’s critters have a place in the choir!)

Planning Team: Pastor Judith Anderson, Pastor Jay Berry, Pastor Jill Collict, Pastor Maristela Freiberg, Pastor Danielle McCleary, Pastor Courtney Smith, Pastor Karen Strietelmeier, Vicar Missy Roberts, and Vicar Dianne Lewis

Theme: Go and Tell the Story

Opening Prayer:

A prayer written by Rev. Tiffany C. Chaney with some editorial changes by Rev. Jay Berry

Gracious and loving God,

[We thank you for this day and for all the blessings you bestow upon us. Help us to see how unique we are and how interesting our stories become in our sharing.] Each story is intricately woven with the fine details of life, seasoned with memories – some pleasant, others not so pleasant. In every detail, every memory, ever-loving accompaniment on our journey, [creating a fabric that knits your people together]. Help us Lord, to share our faith stories in ways and with people who might come to know you all the more as a result of our witnessing. Show us those with whom you would like us to connect. Thank you for those you have sent to share their stories with us. Together, all our stories are part of your story, for which we are grateful. Amen

Dwelling in the Word: Luke 8:26-39

Focus verse: Luke 8:39 “Return home and **tell how much God has done for you.**”

- Breakout Room Discussion Question: Share about a time when you told others how much God has done for you
- Once we consider what God has done for us, telling our story becomes easier, it takes practice
- There is a difference between telling and doing (one might be easier than the other!)
  - o Telling our faith story isn’t always easy
- “Next to my cross I should have a coach’s whistle, helping to encourage people to practice faith” – Rev. Judy Anderson

Faith Stories

- Handout has the questions and prompts to help you think about ways to talk about your faith in different ways
- Use these questions to help you craft an elevator speech for your faith
  - o Don’t wait to the end to explain your point, lead with it and then explain!

Example 1: Pastor Judy shared a great example of a time God helped her through prayer

Example 2: Pastor Courtney shared “When I’m scared or afraid I know God is bigger than the boogeyman. It’s a song I learned as a kid from Veggie Tales and it’s something I hold onto whenever I’m in need.”

Breakout Rooms: Practice using these prompts and crafting an elevator speech to help you talk about faith

- Good practice to learn how to be short and concise
- Synchronicity: our time and God's time matching up
- Story: asking waitstaff for their prayer requests before praying over a meal in a restaurant or at a sporting event
- Listening to each other tell faith stories helps spark our own ideas and stories
- Listening to others reminds us of God's faithfulness in ways we don't expect
- Together we can always come up with more answers and experiences

\*\*We are good at doing faith but not always talking about it. When we practice and help one another, it gets easier (just like playing a sport or an instrument or learning math)

Rev. Nancy Nyland, Director for Evangelical Mission for the Indiana-Kentucky Synod

- Brief ministry history: previously served at multiple congregations at the same time in the South Dakota synod, now does mission development/redevelopment in the IN-KY Synod
- Why would we think we can do something without practicing it?
  - o Practice makes us more comfortable and confident
- Invitation to take the Faith Stories prompts and come up with answers to each of them individually during devotion time
  - o The more we do it, the easier it gets
- Once these stories come to mind they are on our hearts and more easily come to our lips when the opportunity to share arises
- Intentional and important work
- There are many and varied ways to share our faith, **do what is comfortable to you**
  - o Don't be embarrassed if it makes you emotional, it shows vulnerability and authenticity

Creating an Opportunity to Share Your Faith

- Use "I" statements, what is your personal experience
  - o Don't "you" people, don't say things like "you should" or "you do"
  - o Our culture thrives on this, we need to focus on self
- Scene 1: You are in a doctor's office and someone next to you expresses concern for their child, how could you respond?
  - o I pray when I worry and it makes me feel better
  - o I would like to pray for \_\_\_\_
    - What is your child's name so I can pray for them
  - o I know God can help the doctors figure out what is wrong
  - o I will keep you in my prayers
  - o I rely on my faith and the presence of God to walk with me in difficult times like this
- Scene 2: A co-worker asked how your weekend was, how could you respond?
  - o I went to church
  - o I went to breakfast after church/ I went to church and then to Jazz in the Spirit
  - o I heard an amazing sermon this week (insert inspiration)
  - o I spent time with my church family

- I sang a great song at church, I'm in the choir
- Scene 3: You are invited to go out after work but want to spend time with your family instead, how could you respond?
  - I would like to but tonight is family night, God has blessed me with an amazing family, I am so lucky
  - I appreciate the invite, maybe next time, but tonight I'm going to recharge my spiritual batteries with my family
- Scene 4: Delivering food to a neighbor who is sick and starting a conversation with their gratitude for your visit, how could you respond?
  - Our casserole ministry at church is great
  - I am blessed to be able to visit with you
  - A huge in a casserole
  - I want you to know you aren't alone
  - My church did it for me and it's an honor to do it for you
- Scene 5: Someone asks "why do you pray over dinner?" How could you respond
  - We thank God for what God gives
  - We thank God for giving us food
  - We thank God for taking care of us
  - We thank God knowing that others don't have enough food
- Scene 6: Someone expresses feelings that God has abandoned them, how could you respond?
  - Ask why, then listen
  - I feel that way too sometimes
  - Our time is not God's time, God is near to you always
  - Would you like to talk more?
  - The God I know has broad shoulders, it's okay to be mad/frustrated
- Scene 7: Someone asks you "what is a Lutheran?" How could you respond
  - Christian, Catholic-lite, Catholic without the guilt
  - Maybe they were asking "what is your church like" does that change the answer
    - Community who loves
      - I believe in God's unconditional love for all people
      - Saint and Sinner: we are God's beloved no matter what
      - Grace = God's riches at Christ's expense
      - Affirming and accepting
- Reflection: How does this make you feel? Do you feel like you could implement these responses in these situations?
- It takes practice but **intentionality is key**
  - Take a minute to think before you respond, you might just be able to plant seeds

#### We Will No Longer Be A Welcoming Church (article as a separate document)

- How do we extend past just welcoming people
- Invite them!
  - Find places and space to invite people into relationship

- Relationship is key even/especially if people aren't in church – its not about nickels and noses (or butts in pews or numbers)
- “Friendly Church” but people are looking for more than just relationships or friendships, how do you intentionally create opportunities and connections
- Go further than just “hi, how are you”
- People need to have three to four significant and important relationships in the first six months or they will likely leave
- If our motive is money and members, people will see right through it, ultimately, we want people to have a relationship with God
- This takes time
  - Take the time, do the intentional relationship building: mix people up, give them discussion prompts
- Jesus' calling was harsh, we have misinterpreted it for comfort and ease but we need to go out and make community to know what is going on (we can't just hide in our buildings)
- Build community to know who what everyone is going through and make those connections
- We need to rethink how we become community and follow Christ – Jesus didn't make it easy and neither should we
  - We are nervous about this level of vulnerability which is why it takes practice!

#### Closing Blessing from St. Paul

- We are connected through our stories, even when we think our story isn't enough, that is exactly what God uses.

“To God, whose power now at work in us can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, to God be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus through all generations, world without end! Amen.” – Ephesians 3:20-21 (Inclusive Bible translation)

for Go And... Share the Story  
July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 7:00 pm on Zoom