

I have been working with the Synod Mission Support Team for the last couple of years. It's a group that does just what it sounds like, strives to encourage support of the synod above and beyond support of one's local congregation. God's Grace in Motion is the latest Challenge; let's get moving... walk, bike, skip, rollerblade (you get the idea) and in so doing pledge financial support to the synod (again, above and beyond). The funds will be used to help cover the cost of synod transportation/movement. Team members were asked to write a short devotion to be used in the midst. Here's what I submitted:



Jesus could have certainly done it by himself. He was enough, you know what I mean? Jesus was charismatic enough, smart enough, energetic enough, creative enough, strong enough, good looking (hmmm, you think?) enough to proclaim God's love and grace, the kingdom of God come near. Jesus could have done it by himself. However, he didn't ....What's the first thing he does? He calls together a community, because life is simply better in community. Amen. Life is better together, we are God's gift one to another, for the sake of the world God so loves. This is most certainly true in communities of faith, in churches and yes, in synods and denominations ... we are better together as we travel through this life.

So Jesus called those first disciples, that community, and then immediately they started walking. They started moving, sharing the good news with as many as they could, wherever they could, whenever they could. Because good news is meant to be shared, isn't it? Think about the last time someone you loved had a baby/grandbaby. Think about the last time someone got into THE school, the top of their list school, or got THE job, you know the one they had hoped to get. Or, think about the last time you tried a new restaurant or saw an amazing movie. What's the first thing you did? You shared the news. Good news is meant to be shared. That's what God calls us to do. As we go, as we travel, we share the good news that we are loved and beloved. You are graced and forgiven. You are never alone. You are enough, and yes, you are gifted. Maya Angelou was once asked what the best gift you could give a child. She said, "Joy in their presence." When I heard this, I thought, not just for children. We are better together when we find joy in each other, and in the communities in which we participate. Thanks be to God for our various communities, for churches, and for synods within the ELCA. We are so much better together when feeding the hungry, visiting those in prison, providing clothing, encouraging the troubled, and making a joyful noise in worship, and in the world.

Thanks be to God for those on the journey with us sharing good news!

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news! (Romans 10:15)

Picking up on a similar thought, Bishop Mike met with the council leadership for a mini-retreat last month. The group explored Appreciative Inquiry, which is strength-based leadership. He began by asking: "What do you appreciate about ULC?" You will each need to come up with a different unique answer.

Here are the replies:

- The people
- Our willingness to give and care for others outside our community of faith
- Lasting, strong friendships
- Willingness to do what needs to be done
- The number of things going on here, there's always something going on
- Our determination, small but mighty
- Overall acceptance of new folks
- We worship well together, from the greeters, ushers, musicians, pastor .... Together we worship well.

How would you answer? What would you add to the list?

Again, an affirmation that we are better together, God's gift, one to another.

Thank you for your partnership in ministry ... you are a blessing!!

*Pastor Karen*