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“...that they may be encouraged  
in heart and united in love...”  
Colossians 2.2 (NIV)

PRESIDENT’S LETTER  
OCTOBER 2023

EMPOWERMENT AND SERVICE

Faith formation leaders are empowering others, whether we are aware of it or not. A brief conversation and/or word of encouragement may inspire someone to use their gifts. We never know the seeds we may be planting as we encourage and empower others in service. Our empowerment of others is deeply influenced by how we were empowered. I moved to a new state during my tenth-grade year in high school. I was the newbie in school, and it was hard to break into the already established groups. I was new in the neighborhood, and it was a while until I established friendships.

The church was the only place where I felt welcomed and affirmed. My pastor invited me to help organize a community event which brought several churches together. I discovered a gift for organization which I still use today. My pastor saw in me gifts I didn’t know I had. This same pastor encouraged me several years later to consider going into ministry. This relationship had a profound influence on my life and ministry. Empowerment flows out of relationships – our relationship with God and our relationships with each other.

A colleague some years ago gave me advice when I was trying to form a committee for a major project, where I needed people with gifts in a wide variety of areas. The advice went something like this: When someone is using their gifts, ministry will flow, and a team will develop. This doesn’t mean that there won’t be challenges. I intentionally recruited people who had gifts for specific tasks, but also knew how to work as part of a team. That team existed for a long time, and the project went well year after year.

Empowerment takes relationships, intention and many spiritual practices. Everyone experiences a call to service at some level. We need our lives together in faith communities to recognize these calls and connect gifts to needs. Frederick Buechner defined vocation as the place where “your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” Recognizing the work God calls us to do at certain times and in certain places is part of the fabric of faith formation.

The Christian Education Network has been making connections for many years. We are living in a time when we are discovering new ways of making these connections. Our discovery has included prayerful conversations with valued partners who have also been empowering faith formation leaders and making connections. Reflect on the connections in your own setting. Who have you encouraged to use their gifts? How can new gifts be discovered and used? Where have you built a team where gifts flow out of people and into the community? All these questions can help us celebrate the empowerment that is happening all around us.

May we be reminded in service of who we really are and whose we are.

Deacon Diane McGeoch