



PRESIDENT'S LETTER FEBRUARY 2023

NEW DIRECTIONS

I remember my first staff meeting in my first ministry role many years ago. I was asked to give a detailed accounting of all my meetings, tasks, programs, goals, priorities and so much more. I was not prepared to report on everything I had done or not done, and left the meeting feeling ashamed, guilty and drained. The atmosphere in that meeting was combative and competitive, every moment was to be accounted for, and every ministry needed to be defended in detail. Why are you spending time on that?

What will be the result?

Slowly and gradually over time my perspective changed, and our ministry staff grew in our trust and accountability with one another. There is nothing wrong with accountability and reporting; it is important in ministry. But we had been in competition with one another, instead of focusing on how God was using each one of us in our roles. I didn't realize it then, because I didn't have the language or the practices fully in place, but I was learning about boundaries and discernment.

Faith formation ministry often has results that we are not aware of for many years or are not visible in measurable ways. We each live into our callings and gifts, and trust God with the results. We need to live into a deep trust that God is working in and through us. What is God calling you to do in this moment, at this time in your setting, and how can you use your gifts and the gifts of those serving alongside you? Answering these questions takes time and prayer and patience and openness to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

I am now retired and using my time and gifts in different ways. When I was newly retired a year ago, I was very concerned about productivity. I want to do these things, accomplish these goals. That was the wrong place to start. Time with colleagues, discussions with friends and family, and regular spiritual direction help me ask some deeper questions: What is God calling me to do and be at this stage in my life? What new connections can be explored? What existing connections can be strengthened? I need to be open to the new movements in my life and be alert to the nudges of the Spirit.

I am able to report that during my first year of retirement I've been challenged and surprised by new invitations, while maintaining some involvements that match my gifts and passions. Some longings of my hearts have been met; others are in progress. Some themes, people, and circumstances keep bubbling up and need attention. Boundaries and discernment are life giving practices that help us hear God's voice.

Thank you to our generous supporters who gave during our endowment campaign The Gift of Love from January 23 to February 13. Our Network continues to live into leadership, outreach, vision, and encouragement to empower faith formation leaders across the ELCA.

With gratitude for all the ways we are connected,
Diane McGeoch

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"...that they may be encouraged
in heart and united in love..."

Colossians 2.2 (NIV)