

Hello Church,
It is infinitely better to have a few good men than many indifferent ones.

-George Washington

I think of the many struggles George Washington endured, especially those at Valley Forge, when I read this quote. There was much to be anxious about in the early days of our republic. Would it survive?

I'm indebted to M. Craig Barnes, president of Princeton Theological Seminary, whose article ***The post-anxiety church***, appears in the February 3, 2016 issue of *Christian Century* magazine.

Professor Barnes is often asked about the future of the church. Pastors want to know if he has any ideas for survival. He says he worries too. It's a question that dives deep into his bones. But, he believes the church has never looked less attractive than when it dresses in anxiety. Historically, that's when we've made our worst mistakes. Fear makes us desperate. We throw what little money and energy we have into trendy programs that make no substantive difference. Or worse, we become fixated on finding someone to blame for our demise. These are expressions of despair and anxiety that drives us to the bottom.

Little good comes from fixating on the empty pews. The mainline church has to stop fretting about its future. The anxiety sucks the life out of the church. The alternative response is for the church to do what it's always done at its best, what it did from the beginning: stop thinking about its future and sacrifice itself to its mission.

As a professor of Christian History, Barnes became convinced that there is no rational explanation for the church's survival over the past 2,000 years—there were many compelling political, intellectual, and social reasons for it to have gone out of business long ago. And none of those threats were ever as dangerous to the church as it was to itself. We've always been our own worst enemy when we fail to live out of the gospel we proclaim. But still the church perseveres.

The only possible explanation for the church's survival is that Jesus Christ chose to use it to continue his mission of bringing the kingdom of God to earth. He can certainly work outside of the church for this holy purpose, but we find our life in the calling to pursue the kingdom. Historically, every time we landed in the ditch, as the mainline church has done today, Christ pulls us out and invites us again to lose our lives to find them.

This means we have to stop fretting about our denominational structures, memberships, divisions, and futures; instead we need to immerse ourselves in the baptismal waters that proclaim the perfect love of God that casts out fear.

We have liturgies of the early church that date back to the second century. In essence they were funerals. Those who were about to enter the church would take off their old clothes as a means of putting off the old, anxiety-ridden life and walk down into the water. The waiting priest would place them under the water saying, "Buried with him in baptism." As they rose the priest continued, "Risen to new life in Christ." They put on new clothes as a symbol of putting on Christ. The rationale for this burial form of baptism was to make the members of the church go through "dying" and get it over with. Once they were no longer anxious about Caesar's persecutions of the church, they were free to boldly proclaim the gospel. You can't scare dead people.

It's a tragic irony for the mainline church to be anxious about its future when we are supposed to be a people who have already given up our lives. The church belongs to Jesus, and its future is in his hands. Fretting about the viability of our denominations only distracts us from the only thing that has ever given us purpose—keeping up with Jesus.

Peace & Grace, Pastor Glen

Worship 8:30
Learning Time for all ages 9:45



Minnesota Annual Conference Session

Generosity is not simply about money. It is an attitude and a way of life that's rooted in a deep understanding that life is a gift and it comes from God, who loves us extravagantly and unconditionally.

The 2016 annual conference session, taking place from June 21-23 in St. Cloud, will focus on this idea through the theme "Living Generously—Unleashing God's Gifts."

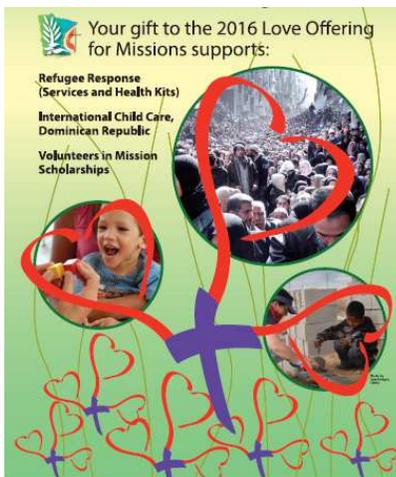
"Eucharist means 'good gift,'" said Director of Ministries, Rev. Cindy Gregorson. "God in Christ extends to us a good gift—the gift of love and life—and invites us to be a good gift to others. Generosity is being a good gift in all that we do and are. It is how we welcome others, how we bless others, how we speak to others."

This year at annual conference, we will not only talk about generosity; we will practice being a good gift to one another and to the St. Cloud community.

Love Offering

Each year, churches in the Minnesota Annual Conference take a Love Offering for Missions. The offering is brought to annual conference session—a gathering of United Methodist clergy and laity from

across the state. Donations to the 2015 Love Offering exceeded \$100,000. Grace Children's Center in Vietnam received 60 percent of the total, grants to help Minnesota churches partner with local schools



received 30 percent, and Volunteers in Mission scholarships received 10 percent. The theme of the 2016 Annual Conference session—taking place June 21-23 in St. Cloud—is "Living Generously: Unleashing God's Gifts," and funds from this year's Love Offering will go four projects. This year's offering has both a hands-on component and a financial component.



Maundy Thursday

**Maundy Thursday Observance
March 24th 7:00 pm**



**Sunday March 27th
Easter Sunrise Service 7:00 am
Breakfast at 7:45 am**

Easter Service 8:30 am

Racine Food Shelf

Open Thursday night 6-7 pm and 1st and 3rd Saturdays 9 to 11 am

Library

Open 1st and 3rd Saturdays 9 to 11 am

Next Generation Leaders

by Susan Beaumont



At an event I was approached by a well-dressed older woman who said, “We are willing to do whatever it takes to get the next

generation of leaders involved. We will invest our time to train them, equip them, and guide them as they learn how to run this congregation. It’s their turn to step up, just like we did when we were their age.” It seemed like a noble gesture on her part, her willingness to invest in the next generation. But there was an unstated assumption beneath her offer. They will have to learn how to run the organization our way, before we yield leadership to them. She didn’t consider that the next generation of leaders might reshape the organization in significant ways, before they accept the leadership reins. What will it take to turn the leadership of the church over to the next generation? How will the church negotiate the transition?

The Seismic Shift in Volunteerism

The good news is that volunteerism is actually on the rise in our culture. However, the places we find volunteers are shifting. The rate of volunteering inside of the church has dropped dramatically, while the rate of volunteering among people who don’t attend church or civic organizations has nearly tripled in the last twenty years. Volunteerism today requires greater flexibility, better use of technology, and more episodic opportunities for volunteering. Volunteerism has shifted away from an emphasis on skilled workers (who show up and do the tasks they have been

assigned), to knowledge workers (who expect to be empowered with decision making). People are no longer willing to serve on labor intensive, slow moving committees. They are attracted to micro-projects with fast turnaround times and more focused commitments.

Streamlined Structures

For a long time we have approached the leadership development task from the perspective of the organization. What slots do we have open, and how many bodies do we need to equip existing structures? Next generation leadership requires a shift in our orientation, away from the organization as the center of the conversation, and towards the needs and availability of volunteers. The next generation leader wants to bring personal gifts and interests to bear on the needs of the organization. They are passionate about specific causes. They are attracted to smaller projects with bigger impact. With this in mind, we need to reduce the size and complexity of our governance structures. Committees need to be reduced, and in some cases eliminated. We will have to replace ongoing process work with discrete tasks that fit together into a cohesive whole. We need to streamline decision making to facilitate a faster pace of work.

Meeting through Technology

Congregations historically employ committee structures to do our work and strengthen our sense of community through the work that we do together. Gen X (born 1965-1984) and Millennials (born 1985-2004)

would rather find their community connections in other kinds of groups, and make decisions together using more nimble structures. Social media is a natural language for them, and they know how to make strong personal connections over the internet. They are masters of technologies that allow for sharing and shaping information together online. They are comfortable making decisions virtually. Additionally, their available time to do church work is often when others are not available. They need to do their work when personal schedules allow, and they prefer to join a virtual conversation according to their own timeframe. We need to learn how to join them in their world, not just expect them to accommodate ours.

Let Them Teach You

Historically, we have thought about leadership development as a process of teaching and equipping those who are coming up in the ranks behind us. They watch us do it. They do it with us. We watch them do it. Finally, we let them lead. The next generation of leaders is going to pick up the reins differently. They are confident, self-expressive, connected, and open to change. They expect their efforts to result in change, not the maintenance of the status quo. Gen X and Millennials grew up in the digital age. They process information very differently than the Silent (born 1925-1945) and Boomer (born 1946-1965) generations. Boomers grew up with analog data. We think and process information in a linear fashion. Gen X and Millennials are not bound by linear thinking. They leap ahead in the process to access the piece of

information or resource that best serves the moment. We can learn things about the efficiency of our congregations from the different ways that their brains work. We should let them teach us.

Preserve the DNA, Adapt Anything Else

I do not mean to suggest that we simply throw up our hands and let the next generations do whatever they like. I do believe that we should identify our core operating principles and values to protect, and then let everything else evolve. We often don't know how to distinguish between the critical DNA that marks our distinctiveness, and everything else that we do in the name of tradition. The next generations display a high level of respect for their elders. They are very tolerant of diversity and will embrace serving in leadership alongside their elders. However, their respect for people will not override their impatience with outdated technologies and bureaucratic structures. The church has spent a lot of time and energy talking about the preferred worship styles of Gen X and Millennials. It is time we attend to their preferences in volunteerism and leadership as well. The next generations will surprise us with their capacity for organizational leadership, on their terms.

Susan Beaumont is a consultant, author, coach, and spiritual director with [Susan Beaumont and Associates](#). She is author of [Inside the Large Congregation](#) available from [Amazon](#) and [Cokesbury](#). This article is adapted from her newsletter issue of November 19, 2015.

Choir

The choir is always looking for new members. If you are interested in singing with us or if you play an instrument and would like to play during a worship service speak to Deb Goeldi.

These are our March dates, April TBD

March 10 @ 7:00

March 15 @ 7:00

March 23 @ 7:30

March 30 @ 7:00



Movie Night

Want to plan a movie night?

If you have a movie suggestion please let Jeff Goeldi know. The movie will be announced during announcements at Church, we plan to have one soon.

Our First Pizza Baking!



Readers

March

6th – JoAnn Osterhus
13th – Vicki Schroeder
20th – Jessica Warren
27th – Norma Kenning

April

3th – Dee Ann Byrne
10th – Tracy Hoover
17th – Nathaniel Schatz
24th – Kim Vrieze

Greeters

March

6th – Charles & Norma Kenning
13th – Nathaniel Schatz
20th – Bryan & Dawn Vrieze
27th – Scott & JoAnn Osterhus

April

3rd – Jack & Elsie Fox
10th – Ron & Robin Vrieze
17th – Alden & Elsie Marburger
24th – Alysha Bleifus

RACINE

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Our mission is to make
disciples of Jesus Christ
for the transformation of
the world



March/April 2016

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.umcracinemn.org

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