



Mission Interpretation

Telling stories of our hands doing God's work

Mission Memo #449

February 5, 2019

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany (February 10, 2019)



The fifth Sunday after Epiphany continues to highlight unlikely instruments and circumstances appointed to reveal the glory of the Lord. "Who will go for us?" queries the voice of the Lord. A man of unclean lips, a former persecutor of the church of God, and three fishermen who couldn't catch a thing. More surprising still, perhaps, is the fact that we are also called.

Readings

- [Isaiah 6:1-8 \[9-13\]](#) - *Isaiah says, Here am I; send me*
- [Psalm 138](#) - *I will bow down toward your holy temple. (Ps. 138:2)*
- [1 Corinthians 15:1-11](#) - *I am the least of the apostles*
- [Luke 5:1-11](#) - *Jesus calls the disciples to fish for people*

God's Imperfect People

"Go in peace, share the good news." Week after week Christians gather together, hear the word proclaimed, share a meal, and are sent out to bear the good news of God in Christ Jesus to a hungry, needy world. Inside though, we wonder why God has entrusted such an important mission to people like us.

God's prophets and apostles carried the same anxieties. Isaiah declares, "I am a man of unclean lips." Paul asserts, "I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." Peter responds to Jesus' miracle of plenty by saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" Yet, without question, God used these flawed and fragile human beings to proclaim God's mercy and love.

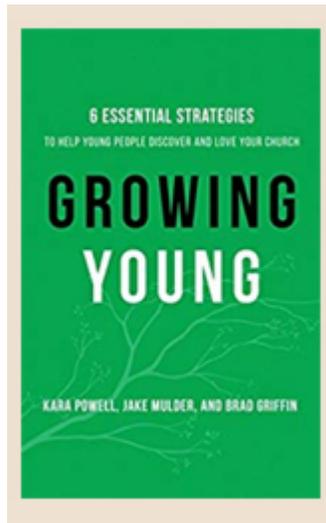
In a world where we are constantly being told that we are insufficient—that we do not have enough, know enough, or matter enough—God's trust in our capacities seems imprudent, even irrational. But notice, Jesus precedes a call to discipleship with a miracle pointing to God's abundant provision, signaling that we will be given all we need.

Martin Luther writes in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, "What I accept, I accept not on my own merits or by any right that I may personally have to it. I

know that I am receiving more than a worthless one like me deserves; indeed, I have deserved the very opposite. But I claim what I claim by the right of a bequest and of another's goodness" (*Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy Lull [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989], p. 302).

Jesus meets us at the shorelines of our own lives, going about our daily work, and calls us to lifelong discipleship. Caught up in God's abundant grace, and fed out of that bounty, we are commissioned to go catch others.

Warm is the new cool - Congregations that are growing young



Most congregations are getting older on average, but believe it or not, some are growing young. The book [Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church](#) explores what those congregations are doing. It turns out that cool music and programs are not nearly as crucial as authentic relationships, warmth, and hospitality.

"In our analyses of the terms young people and adults use to describe their own churches or parishes, we noticed repeated words such as welcoming, accepting, belonging, authentic, hospitable, and caring. We began to call this the warmth cluster. Across the board in statistical analyses, the warmth cluster emerged as a stronger variable than any

one program. And while 6 out of 10 interviewees mentioned group practices like small groups, youth group, and retreats when they talked about why their church is thriving, what seems important about those practices is that they create space for people to be together and nurture relationships."

Check out the [Growing Young website](#) for related materials, assessment tools, and resources. For connections to ELCA efforts to grow young, contact [Rachel Alley](#), ELCA Program program Director director for youth ministries.

Dreaming of a church where everyone's needs are felt and met

A new essay at www.HealthierChurch.org offers an interesting perspective from Dr. Ed Kruse on the subject of hospitality. "Hospitality is caring for and welcoming every stranger, giving her or him warmth from the cold, comforting the needy, and providing much-needed food for the hungry," Kruse writes. "Hospitality is intimately connected to our relationship with God and His love for us and others. Hospitality is a spiritual gift. Hospitality fulfills the God-given need of the giver to

give. Hospitality builds up the body of Christ and glorifies God. It is living into God's love on the ground." Click [here](#) to read the full essay.

Celebrate National Quilting Day March 16

Many of our congregations have very active quilting groups. March 16 is National Quilting Day. For nearly 70 years, compassionate people just like you have put their faith into action and made quilts for people in need around the world. And not just a few quilts—hundreds of thousands of quilts every year. [Learn the some of the ways your congregation can join the celebration.](#)



ELCA launches collaboration with Blessed Tomorrow

In its commitment to pursuing wholeness for creation, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is pleased to announce collaboration with ecoAmerica and its Blessed Tomorrow program, which helps faith-based organizations elevate their leadership on the moral, religious and justice issues surrounding climate change. This ELCA's commitment to caring for creation is expressed through individual and community action, worship, learning, moral deliberation and advocacy. The collaboration with Blessed Tomorrow underscores this church's commitment to raising awareness of climate change and taking action to mitigate its impact. In conjunction with this announcement, the ELCA has released "God's work. Our hands. Caring for Creation Today," a video that explains the Lutheran grounding for and prioritization of creation care and encourages ongoing dialogue and activity. "It's our duty to go out in the world and change it for the better," said the Rev. Amy E. Reumann, director, ELCA Advocacy, in the video. Additional [resources](#) developed through this collaboration include the online guides "15 Steps to Create Effective Climate Communications" and "Let's Talk Faith & Climate."

Emphasizing the commitment to caring for God's creation, the ELCA has taken leadership roles in national and international forums. In September 2018, the ELCA was a primary host of the faith-based Talanoa Dialogue, an affiliate event to the [Global Climate Action Summit](#) in San Francisco. "Talanoa," a traditional word used in Fiji and the Pacific, refers to a process grounded in storytelling, empathy and wise decisions for the common good. In December 2018, the ELCA raised

members' experience and faith-centered reflections to a new level of input and consultation by participating in [COP 24](#), the annual conference of parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. This event marked the first time that the ELCA has participated as a fully accredited entity. In her [2018 Earth Day statement](#), ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton wrote: "The present moment is a critical and urgent one, filled with both challenge and opportunity to act as individuals, citizens, leaders and communities of faith in solidarity with God's good creation and in hope for our shared future."



Valentine's Day is coming soon. Send hogs 'n' kisses to your valentine Give in honor of your valentine, and help support creative, sustainable solutions to hunger and poverty. [Click here](#) to shop.

Coming Events:

Date	Event/Activity	Resources
Feb 15, 2019	2019-20 YAGM Applications due	Visit https://elca.org/YAGM for information and application
April 27, 2019	LSSI Spring Fling 2019 - Westin Chicago Northwest, 400 Park Blvd., Itasca	For more information, contact Mariah Heinz 847.635.4656 or Mariah.Heinz@LSSI.org or visit https://www.lssi.org/
May 9, 2019	Lutheran Day 2019 - Illinois State Capitol, Springfield	For more information contact Joy Medrano 847.635.4653 or Joy.Medrano@lssi.org or visit https://www.lssi.org/
May 12, 2019	Good Shepherd Sunday 2019, All congregations statewide	visit https://www.lssi.org/
June 7 and 8, 2019	2019 MC Synod Assembly, Tinley Park Convention Center, 18451 Convention Center Dr., Tinley Park, IL	For more information visit http://www.mcelca.org/assembly/
Aug 5-10, 2019	ELCA Churchwide Assembly, at the Wisconsin Center, Milwaukee, Wisc.	For more information visit https://www.elca.org/churchwideassembly