



Devotional Moments For Synod Assemblies
Worship Resources
on
The Evangelism Strategy

Objective I: Call the Church to Prayer

...pray for the renewal of this church so that every member, congregation, synod, churchwide unit, and institution might bear witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

(From the ELCA Evangelism Strategy)

The Readings

Acts 1:6-8

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom of Israel?” He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit will come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

(NRSV)

Acts 1:4

“While staying with them, he (Jesus) ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father...”

(NRSV)

Acts 1:14

All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer

(NRSV)

Devotional Thought – “Is this the Time?”

“Timely.” We are “timely” people. Our meetings, our assemblies, our lives – are measured and shaped by time. Agendas, schedules, calendars, daytimers, clocks, watches, alarms, hours, minutes, days, months, years, decades, centuries, millennia – we are well aware of the time.

“Is this the time?”

The disciples asked this question of Jesus in a time of transition. The crucified Jesus had been raised from death. The risen Christ was about to ascend into heaven. Everything was changing. What did it all mean? What were the disciples to do in such a time?

“Is this the time?”

Jesus’ answer is one of promise and hope. **Wait** for the promise of the Father. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit will come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:4, 6-8) And so, the disciples returned to Jerusalem, constantly devoting themselves to prayer, waiting for the promised power to witness.

“Is this the time?”

The mystery of our faith is timeless, yet also shaped by time. “Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.” These words we proclaim as we gather at the Table. Past, present, future are all wrapped in the present of the Presence.

As we hear the call to be Christ’s shining witnesses, we first are called to *take time to pray*, waiting and trusting the coming of the promised power of the Holy Spirit.

Hymn

“Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying”

#775

With One Voice

Litany

(Based on the hymns “Listen to Your Children Praying” and “Now the Silence”)

- L: *(Leader)* Lord, we take time in the busy schedule of our day to ask:
P: *(People)* “Lord, is this the time?”
L: Lord, you call us to be your witnesses in our homes, our communities, our congregations, our synods, and to the ends of the earth.
P: Lord, listen to your children praying.
L: We want to be bold in our proclamation and inspired in our witness.
P: Lord, send your Spirit in this place.
L: Lord, even though we are people of time, we confess that we do not always take time to listen. We do not wait in prayer for guidance to know your way, for discernment to know your will, for wisdom to know your truth.
P: Lord, listen to your children praying.
L: Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” Grant us patient and open hearts, that we might be filled with your power. Lead, guide, and empower us so that we might be faithful witnesses, knowing and doing your will.
P: Lord, send your Spirit in this place.
L: And so, O Lord, we take time to pray ... *(pause)*. Now the silence, *(pause)* now the peace, *(pause)* now the empty hands uplifted.
P: Lord, listen to your children praying.
L: Now the hearing, *(pause)* now the power, *(pause)* now the vessel brimmed for pouring.
P: Lord, send your Spirit in this place.
L: Now the Spirit’s invitation, *(pause)* now the Son’s epiphany, *(pause)* now the Father’s blessing.
P: “Lord, is this the time?”
ALL: Now. Now. Now.

Hymn

“Now the Silence”

#205

Lutheran Book of Worship

Objective II: Prepare and Renew Evangelical Leaders

...nurture evangelical leaders under the renewing power of God's Spirit so that this church can be faithful in its response to God's call to mission and evangelism.

(From the ELCA Evangelism Strategy)

The Reading

John 21:15-17

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." *(NRSV)*

Devotional Thought – "Do You Love Me?"

If there is any focus that the Christian leader of the future will need, it is the discipline of dwelling in the presence of One who keeps asking, "Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?"

Henri J.M. Nouwen
In the Name of Jesus

"Do you love me?"

It's a question we might expect to hear from a child. Or perhaps from teenagers trying to sort out their emotions for another. Or maybe from family members whose relationship has been strained.

It is sometimes asked in frustration, or even in haunting accusation, and often asked with an edge in the voice, fearful of the answer.

"Do you love me?"

Jesus poses this question to Peter ... and to all followers and leaders of Christ's church in every time and place. Three times, Peter had denied Jesus. Three times, Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" Three times, Jesus calls forth servant leadership: "Feed my sheep. Tend my lambs."

Three times In the voice of Jesus, the haunting question becomes a grace-filled word. For every time we fail and falter, for every time we hide our light instead of beaming as a shining witness, for every word of denial ... Jesus gives us one more time to show our love.

"Do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord, you know that we love you."

"Feed my sheep. Tend my lambs. Be my disciples. Again. One more time."

Hymn

“Lord, Speak to Us that We May Speak”

#403

Lutheran Book of Worship

Litany

- L: (Leader) Jesus asks, “Do you love me?”
P: (People) Yes, Lord, you know that we love you.
L: Jesus asks again, “Do you love me?”
P: Yes, Lord, you know that we love you.
L: And then Jesus asks a third time, “Do you love me?”
P: Lord, you know everything. You know that we love you.
L: We confess to you, O Lord, these many things which keep us from loving you.
P: Yet you call us to follow you.
L: Feed us with your word;
P: And guide us as we feed others.
L: We are your sheep. Tend us with your love;
P: And guide us as we tend to the needs of others.
L: We are your sheep. Feed us with your presence;
P: And guide us as we feed the hungry in spirit and body.
L: Forgive us, so that we might forgive others.
P: Guide us, so that we might guide others to your love.
L: Inspire us, so we might inspire others.
P: Shine within us, so we might be a shining light in the darkness of this world. Amen

Hymn

“I Believe I’ll Testify”

#225

This Far by Faith

Closing Word

I leave you with the image of the leader with outstretched hands who chooses a life of downward mobility. It is the image of the praying leader, the vulnerable leader, and the trusting leader. May that image fill your hearts with hope, courage, and confidence as you anticipate the next century.

Henri J.M. Nouwen
In the Name of Jesus

Objective III: Teach Discipleship

... train disciples by equipping people of all ages to be faith-filled witnesses to God as revealed in Jesus Christ and committed disciples in service to others, working for justice and peace in all the earth.

(From the ELCA Evangelism Strategy)

The Reading

Acts 8:29-31; 35

Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over to this chariot and join it.’ So Philip ran up to it and heard him (the Ethiopian eunuch) reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ He replied, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him.

Then Philip began to speak, and starting with the scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.

(NRSV)

Devotional Thought – “Show and Tell”

The request is a common one. A child asks a parent. A player asks a coach. An intern asks a supervisor. An apprentice asks a master artist. A disciple asks a teacher. “I don’t understand. Can you show me?”

How do we “teach discipleship”? The answer just might be found in a simple elementary school activity – “show and tell.” Or perhaps better spoken, “Live and tell.”

For Philip on the dusty road to Gaza, it was “show and tell” time. Propelled by the Spirit, he was in the opportune place at the opportune time with the opportune question. “Do you understand?” “How can I, unless someone guides me?”

An ordinary question, asked of an ordinary disciple on an ordinary road. But Philip realized the extraordinary opportunity before him to teach discipleship. He seized the moment; and beginning with where the eunuch was, he “showed and told” the good news about Jesus.

Toward what opportunities to “show and tell” is God propelling us – as individuals, as congregations, as synods? Fertile moments to teach discipleship can happen just about anytime.

Don’t be surprised if someday, somewhere, when you least expect it, someone comes up to you and says, “I don’t understand. Can you show me?”

God grant us the courage to ask, “Do you understand?” the insight to begin where others are, the inspiration to guide them to new understandings, and courage to “show and tell” the good news about Jesus.

Hymn

“O Master, Let Me Walk with You”

#492

Lutheran Book of Worship

Litany

(Based on the hymn “O Master Let Me Walk With You”)

- L: *(Leader)* O Master, let me walk with you.
P: *(People)* Show us how to lead others to you.
L: Help us the slow of heart to move.
P: Tell us how to tell others of your forgiving love.
L: Teach us the wayward feet to stay,
P: Show us how to guide others to you.
L: Teach us your patience; grant us opportunities to share faith sweet and strong,
P: Tell us again of your grace and mercy, that we might be faithful witnesses.
L: O God, when we hear, “I don’t understand. Can you guide me?”
P: Make us bold witnesses to show and tell the Good News about Jesus. Amen

Hymn

“Lead Me, Guide Me”

#168

This Far By Faith

Objective IV: Start and Renew Congregations

...seek opportunities to strengthen partnerships throughout this church for starting new congregations and renewing existing congregations as centers of service and witness, inviting all to faith in Jesus Christ. *(From the Evangelism Strategy)*

Readings

Psalm 51:10

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew and right spirit within me. *(NRSV)*

Psalm 104:30

When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth. *(NRSV)*

Devotional Moment – “Something Old, Something New” (or “The More Things Change ...”)

“Retro” is “in.” Perhaps it is a yearning for a more familiar time. What was old becomes new once again.

We see it all around us – in furniture, fashion, architecture, art, music. And, dare we say it, in people, in congregations, in synods, in the church. New beginnings ... renewal ... new ways of telling the old, old story of Jesus and his love.

The psalmist of long ago recognized the power of God to inspire, create and renew: “When you send your Spirit, they (all the works of the Lord) are created, and you renew the face of the earth.” God’s Spirit creates, renews, guides, inspires.

Who knows how the Spirit will inspire our proclamation? We may sing a new melody to proclaim it. We may use keyboard and the World Wide Web to disseminate it. We may use a different translation of the story to tell it.

The method we are inspired to creatively use may change. But “it” – the Good News story of God’s love for us in Jesus Christ – remains the same – yesterday, today, and tomorrow. It’s a powerful story that changes lives ... and congregations ... and synods ... and the church ... and the world.

“Something old, something new”

And so we come full circle. The same Spirit which was present at creation is present and moving today to create and renew the church. The same Spirit which empowered and ignited a fear-filled, motley band of believers is transforming us into bold and shining witnesses. The same Spirit which propelled Paul into the world is pushing us out into new and exciting opportunities for mission and service.

And the same old, old story of Jesus and his love remains ever new, ever vibrant and life-changing, ever needing to be heard again and again.

“I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love.”

Don't just sing it. LIVE IT!

Hymn

“I Love to Tell the Story”

#390

Lutheran Book of Worship

Litany

(from the Hymn, “O Jesus Christ, May Grateful Hymns be Rising” Lutheran Book of Worship #427)

- L: *(Leader)* O Jesus Christ, may grateful hymns be rising in every city for your love and care;
P: *(People)* Inspire our worship, grant the glad surprising that your blest Spirit rouses everywhere.
- L: Grant us new courage, sacrificial and humble,
P: Strong in your strength to venture and to dare,
L: To lift the fallen, guide the feet that stumble,
P: Seek out the lonely, and God's mercy share.
- L: Show us your Spirit, brooding o'er each city as you once wept above Jerusalem.
P: Seeking to gather all in love and pity, and healing those who touch your garment's hem.
L: Create in us a new heart, O God,
P: And renew a right spirit within us.
- L: Send your Spirit to move mightily in your church,
P: that we might be boldly tell the old, old story which is ever new – the story of Jesus and his love. Amen

Hymn

“Shine, Jesus, Shine”

#651

With One Voice

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