

CROSS Connection



The Cross Connection is a monthly publication of the Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod published for its clergy, associates in ministry, lay leadership and ecumenical partners.

From the Bishop

June 2015

God's Beloved People,

Grace and peace to you as we enter the summer season of less frenetic activity, some warmth in the air and water, and fresh growing garden food.

Susan and I had the unusual opportunity to visit the Hanford Nuclear Reservation a few weeks ago. I've wanted to visit the site for many years, simply to know more about what went on there beginning in the 1940's and to get a sense for how the cleanup is going now. The fact that Hanford (and the Idaho National Lab) are within the territory of our synod issues something of a call to me to pay attention.

Our bus was full of excited people as we left Richland at 7:30 in the morning for a five hour, 108 mile tour of many different parts of the site. 9 nuclear reactors form an arc along the Columbia River and most of them are "cocooned" for now, encased in material good for another 50 years and waiting for time, technology, and cleanup money to be available so they can be dismantled and stored, somewhere, until the radioactivity finally subsides.

The central focus of the tour was a visit to Reactor B, the first one built just four years after Enrico Fermi's experiments at the University of Chicago. Our tour guide, a nuclear physicist, expressed deep pride in the engineering, the science, and the people who rallied to Albert Schweitzer's warning that other nations were pressing to develop atomic weapons. Standing in front of the array of tubes into which

uranium plugs were inserted to process plutonium, a process cooled by Columbia River water, was deeply affecting and I'm still trying to absorb all the thoughts that were aroused.

The remainder of the trip focused on clean-up efforts including material being buried on the central plateau, the underground tank issues, and the vitrification plant that is eventually intended to create glass logs binding nuclear material for long-term storage.

There isn't enough space or time here to process all this information, but I do want to invite you to consider touring the site yourself. (<http://www.hanford.gov/c.cfm/publicTours/>) Such an enormous reality calls for theological reflection on creation, creation care, the deep ambiguity of war, the vocation of science, the nature of sin and the promise of forgiveness, all set within the love and mercy of God. Luther might ask, "What does this mean?"

God bless you in summer
Sabbath.

Bishop Martin Wells



2015 Synod Assembly Highlights

“Like a Watered Garden: a theology of water, worship and the world around us” was the theme of 2015 Assembly for Eastern Washington Idaho Synod based on Isaiah 58:11-12. We gathered on April 24-26 at the Red Lion hotel in Pasco, Wash. Ken and Stephanie Tesch were the Co-chairs of the assembly. This year we said farewell and thank you to our Assembly manager Karla Olson for her 11 years of wonderful service to our Synod. In turn we welcomed Julia Bennett as our new Assembly manager. The four synod “Net-Workers” were installed; Kristin Koskella, David Kappus, Linda Howell and Jim Peterson.



Guest speakers *Dr. Ben Stewart* and *Rev. Susan Briehl* spoke of God’s valuable gift of water in our agriculturally based synod. Emphasis was on how vital water is to our entire existence and spoke of metaphors for Baptismal water through Luther’s Flood Prayer, Baptism and daily life, the Flood of Grace and Baptism and Easter.

We welcomed Churchwide Representative *Rev. Margaret Payne*, Director for Mission Support for the ELCA. Her report included greetings from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and reminded us that we are Church, we are Lutheran, we are Church for the sake of the World, and we are the ELCA TOGETHER.

We re-elected Synod Vice President Gary Gemar and Treasurer Tami McHugh and thanked them for their faithful commitment.

Voting members who will attend the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in New Orleans, August 8-16, 2016:

Youth Representative: Katie Wee, St. Luke, Spokane WA

Person of Color or Language Other than English Representative: Rev. Misael Fajardo-Perez, Wenatchee Valley Lutheran Latino Ministry

Lay Male: Donn Gehret, Central Lutheran, Spokane WA

Lay Female: Cheri Nelson, Salem Lutheran, Spokane WA

Clergy Position 1: Rev. Dave Haven, Celebration Lutheran, Wenatchee WA

Clergy Position 2: Rev. Meggan Manlove, Trinity Lutheran, Nampa ID

Our outgoing Synod Council members, Jarod Fritz, Donn Gehret, Sharlene Harvey, Mary Jamison and Ken Jones were thanked and given our synod’s traditional servant towels.

New Synod Council members voted in:

Treasure Valley Cluster: Rev. Mike Sager, Hope Lutheran Church, Eagle ID

Clergy At Large: Rev. Kristin Kuempel, First Lutheran, Kennewick WA

Youth Representative: Jackson Bewick, St. Mark’s, Spokane, WA

Other elections:

Consultation Committee Clergy Position 1: Rev. Kimberly Meinecke, First Lutheran, Pasco WA

Discipline Committee Lay Female: Kitty Eagle, Messiah Lutheran church, Spokane WA

Discipline Committee Lay Male: John Savage, St. John’s, Nezperce ID

Resolution 2: Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod Capital Campaign. The Synod Council initiated a feasibility study which revealed that a campaign at this time was possible and there was positive support.

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Call Process Status

A Process beginning/congregational study	I Interim	AP Associate/Assistant Pastor
B Names received or on-site visits in process	P Pastor	VP Visitation Pastor
C Call in process/issued	CP Co-Pastor	AIM Associate in Ministry
NV New Vacancy	LP Lead Pastor	L Lay Position
TC Term call	SP Supply Pastor	TM Transition Minister (available for the open-ended call)
VP Visitation Pastor		

POS	LOCATION/CONGREGATION	STATUS	PASTORAL CARE	
P	Boise, ID – Immanuel Lutheran	NV	Kimberly Meinecke	I
P	Boise, ID – King of Glory	NV		
P	Boise, ID – Shepherd of the Valley	NV	Joel Westby	I
P	Caldwell, ID – Faith Lutheran	B		
P	Chewelah, WA – St. Paul Lutheran	NV	Betty Krafft	SP
P	Firth, ID – Bethel Lutheran	A	Paul Malek	TEEM
P	Gifford, ID – Good Hope Lutheran	A	Valerie Beesley	TEEM
P	Grandview, WA – Immanuel Lutheran	C	Gary Rhode	
P	Jackson, WY – Shepherd of the Mountains	B		
P	Kennewick, WA– Lord of Life	A	Ron Shipman	I
P	Pasco, WA – First	NV		
P	Sandpoint, ID – First Lutheran	C	Bob Chenault	I
P	Spokane, WA – Bethlehem Lutheran	NV	Steve Wee	SP
AP	Spokane, WA – St. Luke’s			
P	Spokane, WA – St. Mark’s	NV	Eric Dull, Kate LePard	
P	Spokane Valley, WA – Zion Lutheran	A	Mike Grabenstein	I
P	Terrace Heights, WA – Tree of Life	NV		
TM	Toppenish, WA – Faith Lutheran	NV	Jillian Ross	TM
P	Yakima, WA – Central	NV	Joel Martyn	AP

Retirements

Rev. Jim Grunow, Shepherd of the Valley, Boise will retire June 1, 2015
 Rev. Dick Finch, St. Mark, Spokane, WA will retire June 30, 2015
 Rev. Mike Scheid, Central, Yakima, WA will retire June 30, 2105

Resignations

Rev. Kari Sansgaard has resigned her call at King of Glory - Boise, ID to begin CPE study

Calls Accepted

Rev. Gail Hart has accepted calls to serve Faith Lutheran in Kamiah, ID and Ascension Lutheran in Orofino, ID. She expects to begin June 1, 2015.



Presiding bishop

By Elizabeth A. Eaton

Worship is the heart of all we do

Given competition, is it ‘hub of our week, space of our regrouping’?



There is a Seattle-based caffeinated beverage company that goes to great lengths to provide excellent customer service. Its campaign is to make itself everyone’s “Third Place.” “First Place” is home, “Second Place” is work and “Third Place” is the local coffeehouse. There is meticulous training for employees, relentless market research and creative adaptability employed

by the company to retain customers.

Employees practice the “hand-off plane” where they are taught to make eye contact when handing over the vente mocha latte to the customer. This is so the customer will have a transformative experience while sipping a cup of joe. And it works. In a letter to thank the staff a woman wrote: “You are the hub of our week, the space of our regrouping,” and she went on to describe a multigenerational, multicultural, multi-socioeconomic community where she and her family found comfort and a sense of belonging.

This is our competition.

We are church. At the heart of what we do is worship, and at the heart of our worship is the crucified and risen Christ. Everything else we do is formed, nourished, sustained and transformed by our life as a faith community gathered around word and sacrament, abiding in the love of God. Without this intentional, regular communion with God and each other it’s not possible for us to speak an authentic word of hope to a broken world—the world God so loves.

When we gather for worship we hear God’s word of promise; we confess our helplessness; receive forgiveness; we pray; and we welcome new brothers and sisters through baptism, promising to support them in their walk in faith. We are fed with the bread of life and receive our Lord poured out for us. And then we are sent back into the world. Worship is essential for the church’s life and service.

But how much attention do we pay to the preparation and execution of our corporate worship? Is it the “hub of our week, the space of our regrouping”? Do we expect to have a transformative experience? The Third Commandment (Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy) and Martin Luther’s explanation (We are to fear and love God so that we do not neglect his word and the preaching of it, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it) remind us that worship is central in the life of faith. Worship is not just another item on the list of programs and activities in a congregation. It is the heart.

Sometimes worship can become a sort of lived-in room—everything has become so familiar that we don’t notice the frayed furniture. What if we entered worship as if it were our first experience of it? What if we saw the congregation and the liturgy through the eyes of a guest? Is the building clean? Where is the real front door? Does anyone greet us? Is the bulletin easy to navigate? Where are the nursery and the restrooms? Are instructions for communion clear?

And what about the worship service itself? We are a liturgical church. There is a certain humility and beautiful communion in not trying to reinvent the service each time, but to join with brothers and sisters throughout the world and across the centuries. And please, please do not rewrite the creeds. It took the church a couple of centuries to come up with the Nicene Creed. Why do we think we can do better knocking it out on our laptop?

This has nothing to do with styles of music—there is a breadth of hymnody in Evangelical Lutheran Worship and related resources. Gospel, Bach, contemporary and world music are all powerful ways of hearing God’s word and singing praise. It’s good to be fluent in the musical vernacular of our communities and to try those of others.

Most of all we should come to worship expecting to be changed. We are touching, tasting, feeling, hearing and seeing the one who knows us and loves us completely. Our lives are restored. We are set free. Fed for the journey we are set loose to go in peace and serve the Lord. Thanks be to God. □

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A monthly message from the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Her email address: bishop@elca.org.

June 5-7: Women's Retreat

This amazing retreat includes worship, great food, relaxation, spa time, and sessions with Dr. Julia Fogg, who will lead us in our theme, "Paul and Communities: The Spirit Builds Community in the Body of Christ." Dr. Fogg is Associate Professor of the New Testament and early Christianity, and chair of the Religion Department at California Lutheran University. Cost is \$113 per person for women 18 years of age and older. CEU credits available through NRRIT.

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The Campaign is a three year campaign that would support our companion Ulanga Kilimbero Diocese in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania is, through its Tumaini School, attempting to complete an Assembly/Dining Hall for the students. It would fund synod endowments for congregational mission (the SHARE Fund) and for the Fund for Leaders in Mission (FLM) and our three Campus Ministry sites at Eastern Washington University, Washington State University, and the University of Idaho. A gift will be given to Lutheran Community Services to expand its work in Idaho and Washington around the issue of human trafficking. The ELCA "Always Being Made New" Campaign will receive a tithe from synod capital campaign funds.

Resolution 2 was passed.

Other synod Resolutions that were considered and passed were:

Resolution 1: Eco-Reformation in the Context of Climate Change

Resolution 3: To Consider Amending the Model Congregation Constitution of the ELCA Regarding Discipline

Resolution 4: Amendments to the EWA-ID Synod Constitution A Memorial (#1, on Eco-Reformation) was passed and will be sent for consideration at the Churchwide Assembly in 2016.

Our Synod Assembly offering went to water projects through the ELCA Good Gifts Program to develop water wells, irrigation and water jugs in countries where clean water is not available. The Synod Assembly voted to approve our 2017 budget which will include 35% Mission Support to Churchwide. This budget represents a 12% increase which allows the synod Net-Workers to be brought on board. Congregations were asked to adjust their mission support for this budget.

St. Luke Lutheran Church *Posting for Youth Ministries Coordinator* *Spring 2015*

St. Luke Lutheran Church (ELCA), a medium to large growing congregation located in north Spokane, Washington, is seeking a Youth Ministries Coordinator for its established, vibrant and relationship-driven ministry to 7-12 graders. This is an administrative position working with our College Leaders. It is a part-time position (20 hours per week) with benefits, salary DOE. View the detailed job description at www.slccspokane.org. Looking to fill the position by July 1, 2015. Send the following information by May 31, 2015 to St. Luke Lutheran Church, ATTN: Admin, PO Box 28948, Spokane, WA 99228-8948 or to slcyouth2015@gmail.com: Letter of Interest, Resume (include 3 references), Faith Statement, & one Letter of Recommendation. Job description available upon request.

Wartburg Theological Seminary
LEARNING for LIFE
SEMINARY FOR EVERYONE

Exploring Faith Courses

Wartburg Seminary is launching a new opportunity for continuing education for rostered leaders AND individuals in congregations. Building on the core belief that theological education and formation are for the whole church, Wartburg is creating new ways for all the baptized, of all vocations, and from all locations to access theological education. Knowing that people have different learning needs and learning goals, Wartburg is looking to create multiple options for people in their formation journey. **Learning is for Life. Seminary is for Everyone.**

One of the newest elements of *Learning for Life: Seminary for Everyone* is the **Exploring Faith Online Courses** that will begin in June.

Share with a Friend

Exploring Faith offers 5-week and 8-week online courses for rostered leaders AND individuals in congregations. Entry Level Courses are designed for individuals wishing to explore matters of faith and theology at a deeper level. Advanced Level Courses are perfect for rostered leaders or those who have studied theology before.

Exploring Faith Topics Include:

- The Gospel According to John, the Shepherd
- Re-Visioning Rural Mission
- Karl Barth Without Apology
- Old Testament in the New Testament
- Church History for the Practice of Ministry
- The Struggle for Faithfulness & Flexibility: From the Reformation to the Present

We invite you share this flyer with individuals or rostered leaders in your synod and consider promoting the

Exploring Faith Courses in your synod newsletters. Individuals may participate as a group or on their own. Classes start in June and more classes will be held this fall.

Visit www.wartburgseminary.edu/exploringfaith to learn more!

Hunger Grant Applications Now Being Accepted

The ELCA World Hunger-funded Domestic Hunger Grants support ministries that offer hope and assistance to many thousands of people who experience poverty and hunger in the United States. These grants do more than just give food to people who are hungry — in addition to immediate relief programs, ELCA World Hunger Domestic Hunger Grants fund projects in community development and community-based organizing and advocacy that strengthen the foundations of communities impacted by hunger and poverty.

In 2015, this program allocated a total of \$739,075 to support 324 domestic projects and programs ranging from congregational food pantries to weekend backpack programs for children to job training and living-wage advocacy campaigns. ELCA World Hunger-funded Domestic Hunger Grants make a difference.

- See more at: <http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/ELCA-World-Hunger/Get-Involved/Domestic-Hunger-Grants#important>

**Lutheran Campus Ministry at EWU
Annual Golf Tournament
(4 Person Scramble)
West Terrace Golf (The Fairways)
9810 W. Melville Rd, Cheney, WA 99004
July 16, 2015 at 2 PM
(Check-in at 1 PM)**

- Hole Sponsor \$175 (one free entry)*
- Foursome \$315 (one half-price entry)**
- Hole Sponsorship & Golfing (one free entry)
- Individual \$90
- I am a Pastor (Entry fee waived with foursome)
- Non-Golfer Dinner \$25

* One discount per foursome—whatever is the best discount will be applied.
** Foursome discount applies for registrations received before July 12, 2015



***Join us on
Facebook!***

<https://www.facebook.com/EasternWashingtonIdahoSynodELCA>

- **To register by phone:**
Pastor Shelley at 509.951.5701
- **To register by mail:**
LCM-EWU
639 Elm St
Cheney, WA 99004
- **To register online:**
www.lcmewu.com
- **Questions:**
Pastor Shelley at 509.951.5701
pastor@lcmewu.com

Lutheran Campus Ministry is dedicated to offering worship, Bible study, counseling, community, home-cooked meals and service opportunities in a safe, welcoming atmosphere for all students at Eastern Washington University. Without your support we could not do this vital and important work. ***Thank you!***



Week of Renewal June 22-26, 2015

Location: PLTS Berkeley Campus

You are invited to join new and old colleagues in ministry for a Week of Renewal. Enjoy classes, worship, stimulating conversation, theological reflection, and restorative time. Most evenings are free and make a perfect opportunity to explore the greater San Francisco Bay area.

Morning Courses:

- Preaching as a Ministry of the Whole Congregation
Dr. Shauna Hannan, Associate Professor of Homiletics
- The Prophetic Ministry: Choice or Imperative?
Dr. Steed Davidson, Associate Professor of Old Testament

Afternoon Course:

- Leadership for the Parish: Learning from the World of Management
Instructors from the California Lutheran University's School of Management

Tuesday Evening Lecture:

- Sin Boldly! Justifying Faith for Fragile and Broken Souls
Dr. Ted Peters, Distinguished Research Professor of Systematic Theology

Registration Costs

One Course: \$275

Two Courses: \$400

Meals and Housing have varying costs.

http://www.plts.edu/events/?event_id=3361

You did it.

Congratulations

With just over the 65% level of participation in the Mayo Clinic Health Assessment, our synod met the goal and will benefit from reduced rates to insure our Portico primary insured members.

THANK YOU!

Pray with us



We ask that you keep the ministry of the church, our synod, and the whole world in your prayers, as well as the people listed below . . .

For the family of Rev. Bob Albing, Lutheran Church of the Master - Couer d'Alene, ID upon the recent passing of Bob's mother, Betty Albing.

For Lee Stone, father of Rev. Bob Stone, Faith Lutheran - Caldwell, ID. Mr. Stone is in his final days and his time is getting very thin. May Mr. Stone have a peaceful passing and the Lord's presence in his heart these final days.

For congregations and pastors in call process.

For those who suffer loss, may they find hope.

For families that are torn, may they be mended.

For those facing the struggles of aging, may they find the joy of youth.

For those with medical concerns, may they find comfort and healing.

For those struggling to make sense of their world, may they find peace.

For those trying to make the world a better place, may their work be fruitful, and appreciated.

For retiring pastors, may their body of work be appreciated, and their retirement be as fruitful.

Please let us realize that we should make peace with the past, there is no way to change it.

Prayer Requests . . . to be included or removed from the Synod Prayer Request list, please send your request to the synod office@ewidsynod.org, or call 509-838-9871.

Theologically Sound Resources

Times are changing quickly and the Association for Lutheran Resource Centers (ALRC) is looking at ways that it can be most helpful to synods - and particularly people in congregations who are looking for theologically sound resources.

One step the ALRC has taken has been to create our own Pinterest page where resources are posted. As the coordinator of ELCA resource centers, the Pinterest page currently falls under my name. But, I have invited my ALRC colleagues to post the "theological sound" resources they come across to the boards on this particular Pinterest page as well. Along with ELCA resources posted, there are many wonderful ecumenical resources that can be helpful to ELCA congregations - whether they are stewardship, Christian education, leadership development resources, or other congregational resources!

Here is the link for ELCA Resources Pinterest page: <http://www.pinterest.com/KMatthiasLong/boards/>

**EASTERN
WASHINGTON
IDAHO SYNOD**

of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

314 S. Spruce St., Suite A
Spokane, WA 99201-5823



June 2015
Newsletter

Let Down the Nets
Lifting Our Vision
Jesus First, Last, Always
God's Grace, Our Gratitude
The Spirit Powers Us
No Fear! Transformation
Connections Multiply Miracles
Go, Tell & Serve



Please reproduce any and all articles for publication in congregational newsletters or bulletins.

The **Cross Connection** is also available on the synod website at

<http://www.ewaidsynod.org/synodpublications.html>.

Deadline for articles is the 5th of each month.

Synod Calendar

May 2015

19-20 Bishop Daly (Spokane Diocese) Installation

21 Rural Ministry Meeting (@Synod office)

23 PLU Graduation

25 Memorial Day - Synod Office closed

June 2015

5-6 Montana Synod Assembly

July 2015

15-19 ELCA Youth Gathering in Detroit



Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our Hands

Staff

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Director for Evangelical Missions .. The Rev. Helga Jansons
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Net-Worker The Rev. David Kappus
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Net-Worker Jim Peterson

THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

EDITOR: CYNTHIA WOOLEVER—WWW.THEPARISHPAPER.COM

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COULD LACK OF CURIOSITY KILL THE CHURCH?

The proverbial expression that curiosity killed the cat highlights the danger of probing the unknown. However, the original phrase means something entirely different—that care or worry could wear out nine cat's lives.¹ Even early Christians gave caution about excessive inquiry, believing that curiosity was corrosive to the soul. Saint Augustine wrote, "God fashioned hell for the inquisitive." But can too little curiosity hurt the church?

What Is Curiosity?

Lack of information motivates some people to ask questions in order to fill in their knowledge gaps. Curious people have a passion for knowing more, expanding learning, and solving problems. They are the ones who ask the most penetrating questions. Curious individuals possess a powerful drive to make sense of the world.

We think of children as curious about anything new. According to Ian Leslie, author of *Curious*, the attraction to anything novel is different from the kind of disciplined curiosity seen in creative adults.² Leslie calls this deeper, more effortful and mature type epistemic curiosity. These curious adults possess a strong desire for knowledge and understanding, which motivates them to learn new ideas. They relish problem solving. He also describes another linked form, empathic curiosity, where individuals exhibit great interest in the thoughts and feelings of other people.

Psychologists discovered that curiosity levels vary across individuals. A curiosity measure, the need for cognition (NFC), reveals that many people reach a comfortable level of knowledge and feel no push to learn more. Leslie believes that our access to easy answers led us to forget how to ask questions—what he terms the Wikipedia problem.

Is there an equivalent NFC measure for congregations and their leaders? And, if so, how would your congregation measure up? Ultimately, are churches that reject curiosity also rejecting viability?

What Are the Traits of a Curious Congregation?

A curious congregation is never satisfied with the status quo. While some churches get stuck in their misconceptions, curious churches focus on what is unfolding before them. They are the first to recognize that God is at work and see their holy ministry partnership in the church and community. Unfortunately, success often makes church leaders less curious because if it's not broken, why fix it?

Curious leaders are less concerned about rules and appearances than with what works. Although these leaders take the long view, they do not find the present boring. Rather, the details of current ministry efforts generate more opportunities to expand learning and experimentation.

Truly curious churches experience frustration at their information gaps and that fuels their desire to learn more. Leslie writes that we have an unlimited ability to ignore our ignorance. Some congregations practice strategic ignorance because lack of knowledge requires no action. The first step toward cultivating curiosity is to become



PASTOR TED REALIZED HE HAD A CURIOUS CONGREGATION WHEN THE QUESTIONS BEGAN DURING THE ORGAN PRELUDE.

aware of how much is still unknown. And real curiosity requires considerable effort and time. Unfortunately, congregations are prone to social loafing—what Leslie defines as the widespread tendency of individuals to decrease their own effort when working collaboratively.

Curious congregations demonstrate empathic curiosity. They respect feelings and place a high value on being a caring community. Therefore, empathically curious churches project positive impressions to the community. They are opposite from those churches known as “fighting and firing churches.”³ Non-empathic churches treat the pastor and staff poorly, ignore fair processes, and seem unwilling to stop a few members from accumulating inappropriate power. Too many of their members see the church in a possessive light—as a place to get *their* needs fulfilled.

Curious congregations develop skills in turning puzzles into mysteries. The internet creates an illusion that every question has a definitive answer. However, Leslie makes a distinction between puzzles and mysteries. Puzzles get clear answers and begin with questions like How many? and Where? Mysteries ask the more complex questions, which cannot be answered definitely. The curious church realizes that there are many things we cannot know. They work within these parameters to make continuous, and constantly changing, improvements instead of singular improvements for the short term.

Finally, curious congregations are willing to make choices. Fear and anxiety kill curiosity and keep churches locked in place. Curiosity can be more powerful than courage in the face of obstacles. Organizations that are fascinated by what they don't yet know are the least likely to be caught off guard by change.

Ask the Big Why

Beginning in the 1930s, social scientists moved away from asking *why* people behaved in particular ways and instead studied what they could observe people doing. These behaviorists took pride in the accumulation of objective observations without the subjective taint of invisible motivations. A more recent phenomenon is the perceived power that Big Data made possible by the processing of massive amounts of information. Proponents of data believe that numbers can speak for themselves.

One example of Big Data usage, the Failed State Index, was designed to measure and predict the states around the world close to collapse. Despite drawing from 130,000 data sources, the index did not predict the Arab Spring in 2012. Only experts with in-depth

knowledge of the region's history, culture, and needs could provide insight into *why* the events unfolded.

A curious congregation is always composed of people with deep faith, relationships, traditions, and history. Their willingness to dig deeper and ask *why* questions yield the most profound insights. Most questions tend to be the type where answers fit neatly. However, if the right question isn't asked, an insightful answer has nowhere to go.

Some Curious Questions

Even while many may still believe the current implication of the phrase curiosity killed the cat, the retort, and satisfaction brought him back, has also gained popularity. This reply takes back the original meaning and highlights the importance of asking curious questions. Below are just a few examples of questions that curious congregations can ask. How will your congregation respond?

- What congregational activities and programs are going well? Why is that the case? What activities and programs do we wish were more effective? Why are they less effective?
- Thinking about your current and previous pastors, what leadership approach seemed to fit your church best? Why do you think that approach was most effective at that time?
- What are the congregation's core values that help explain members' motivations and behaviors? What process is the church using to examine and transform desired values into core values?
- Is our congregation a neighborhood church where most worshipers live nearby or is it a non-geographical congregation, drawing worshipers from a wider area? Why do we believe we are called to serve in this location?
- If our church leaders could travel back in time to twenty years ago, what message would they deliver to those in our congregation? Would those earlier leaders listen and act on that message? Why not?
- Will the passage of time expand or contract our church's attractive options? Why?

1. <http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/curiosity-killed-the-cat.html>.

2. Material drawn from Ian Leslie, *Curious: The Desire to Know and Why Your Future Depends On It* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), whose work describes curious individuals.

3. Thom S. Rainer, “Nine Traits of Mean Churches,” <http://thomrainer.com/2015/03/23/nine-traits-mean-churches/>.