

## Launching the Missional Leadership Process

About a year ago, Bob Conover, the Executive Presbyter in the Presbytery of the Redwoods and I, began discussing an idea for a joint missional leadership development process for the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii and the Synod of the Pacific. The General Assembly Mission Council had money in the Heiserman Fund, which had been given years ago for projects that two or more synods wanted to work on together. Bob and I have been friends since my days in the Synod of the Pacific. We both suggested our idea to our respective synods and approval was given to apply for the funds. Our grant request was approved, the money was received, and we are now moving forward.

We held three events for pastors this past spring. We had one in Arcadia (near Pasadena), one in Sacramento, and one in Portland. About 90-100 pastors attended the spring events on Leadership in Times of Discontinuous Change. They were invited to be a part of a ten month pastor cohort process. Over the summer, the pastors filled out a Pastor 360 survey and asked at least 20 church members to fill out the survey on them as well. As a coach for one of these pastor groups, I also filled out an Executive 360 survey and had about 20 people fill out the survey on me, as well.

This past week, we gathered with leaders from The Missional Network (Alan Roxburgh, Mark and Nina Lau Branson, and John McLaverty) and with the pastors to give them the results of their 360 surveys and to kick off the ten month cohort process. We had three groups meeting the same day in Pasadena, Sacramento, and Portland, and were connected by a video conferencing system.

The missional leadership process has been influenced by Everett Rogers' work on the *Diffusion of Innovation*, which asks how do you do culture change within an organization? What are the skills and capacities that leaders need in order to be able to lead their people through adaptive change? We are facing challenges we have not seen before. We were trained for a world that doesn't exist anymore, and we are discovering our way into the new world. We are going on a journey together where we are learning as we go. Our context is different than it was just ten years ago. This is a process in just-in-time learning.

We used the image that the church is like a sailboat. The church, like the sailboat, is not something that you can "drive", but is something that is driven by the winds of the Holy Spirit. We can't predict or control what happens. We are tacking and weaving our way across the water, trying to stay in the path of where the wind of the Spirit is blowing.

Why are we going on this journey? There is A Great Unraveling going on in both the church and the culture. We have been inside a wonderful tradition that has been woven together for centuries. It has been a good tradition and we don't want to throw it away. But, it is coming apart. There is something deeply important being lost. We want to figure out how to lead in this time of unraveling, when the Spirit is pushing us places we have not been before.

Leadership cultivates environments that release the missional imagination of God's people in a particular locale. These environments are where we go to learn again to listen to and discern the

Spirit of God. We need this new imagination, because we know that our management strategies and techniques aren't working so well anymore.

Our metaphor is that pastors are teaching elders. That is still important an important role, but it is no longer sufficient. We need to be cultivators who form a people in the likeness of Jesus Christ, asking what God is up to in our neighborhoods and how do we join that work? This is about change. We are invited into a journey of change. This leadership process is not about how to change the church. The focus is on what kind of change we need to make as leaders. We know that this kind of change does not happen in a straight line like going from point A to point B. It is like the tacking and weaving of the sailboat as it goes from the left to the right to the left to the right as it crosses the water.

The 360 survey looks at characteristics and skills in four areas: personal foundation attributes, creating a shared future, forming a congregational culture/environment, and engaging our context. If we are going to go through real change, then we must begin with listening to what is going on. We begin moving through the Missional Change model, which moves from Awareness to Understanding to Evaluation to Experimentation and then to Commitment. The 360 survey begins this process by getting leaders going with Awareness and Understanding. This is about culture change and culture change is always adaptive change.

This process looks at forming new habits, values, attitudes, and practices. It looks at a new way of leading. As we learn to be different people, and as we learn to become different leaders, we are also looking at how we change the culture of our congregations, our presbyteries, and our synods. How do we cultivate a new imagination of what a presbytery and a synod could be? Can we begin to create a culture in our presbyteries where we are asking different kinds of questions? Can we as leaders become open enough to say, look, we are facing problems we don't know how to solve. How do we do this? How do we do this together? Can we make this the emerging culture of the presbytery?

I think this is part of the deeply important ministry of our presbytery. This is one of the reasons why we exist and one place where we add value to our leaders and our congregations. Bringing people together in learning communities is critical to the cultivation of a positive, viable, hope-filled future for our presbytery. Regardless of the unraveling that is going on around us, this is one way that we continue to build strength into our leaders and our congregations, so that we will be a part of what God is doing in our world. Please pray for us as we move through this process this year. I am excited to see where Christ will lead us and what will come out of this!