

Visioning Session, MNO Synod Council Meeting, August 2008

Process

- Following study of Acts 2, 10 and 16, we addressed the following questions:
 - What is God doing here?
 - What did the people of faith do in the chapter you studied?
 - What are the lessons the synod can learn from your assigned text?
 - What values or principles were being used to make decisions?

What is God Doing Here?

- sent the Holy Spirit
- empowered the disciples
- opened salvation to all
- fulfillment of the covenant promises
- called disciples
- teaching
- giving visions
- setting free
- guiding
- testing

What did the people of Faith do?

- responded to the message
- baptized
- worshipped / sacrament
- they asked “What does this mean?”
- listened eventually
- obeyed
- left their comfort zone
- made trouble
- disturbed the city
- worked for justice
- taught
- cared for others
- lived lawfully within church and society
- listened for God’s voice through scripture and prayer
- freed oppressed
- healed

What are the lessons the synod can learn from your assigned text?

- empower people
- show possibilities
- throw away the rule book
- welcome all
- Jesus' call is about taking the message out to community
- our call is discerned by community through scripture reading and prayer
- our call is not about being safe or trouble free

What values or principles were being used to make decisions?

After considering our responses to the above questions, the following set of guiding principles / values were developed:

As we make decisions and plan ministry in the synod we will strive to:

- Discern God's will through scripture and prayer
- Build community
- Seek the common good
- Shape and grow disciples
- Foster partnerships
- Share the gospel

Mission Statement

- we reviewed mission / purpose statements of the MNO developed in previous visioning sessions of Council.
- our goal was to develop a mission / purpose statement of less than 15 words that would be easily memorized. The result:

Empowered by God! Shepherding the church! Serving the world!

Missional Directions

- We reviewed the five missional directions we set at the January 2008 meeting of Council. The last direction (Addressing rural despair) was changed to reflect a more positive message.
 - Renewing and empowering congregations
 - Strengthening lay and rostered leaders
 - Answering the spiritual hunger of our communities
 - Tackling poverty
 - Fostering hope in rural settings

Initiatives

We brainstormed about what we would like to be able to report to the convention in 2010 as our accomplishments in the two years leading up to that convention.

- utilize technology to connect/link congregations to the synod, synod to the congregations and congregations to congregations
- organize training webinars for rural communities
- empowering people to testify to their faith
- greater engagement with scriptural studies in our congregations
- foster cooperation between pastors and congregations in ministry
- foster partnerships with existing organizations to work towards the elimination of poverty
- celebrate what God is doing in rural communities (share stories)
- growth in diaconal ministry placements
- change in attitude about how ministry exists (i.e., without a building and / or pastor)
- strengthen the financial health of the synod.