

Do You Not Know?

Our ministry of welcoming seekers, and the art of creating space to be encountered.

Reverend Gregor Sneddon

Welcoming is important, foundational, *Gospel*. But what's next? How do we welcome the curious, the exiled, the returning, the seeker, and create a space to be encountered by Jesus, to build relationship, to help discern the transformative path of dying with Christ and sharing in his resurrection?

Mainline churches experience growth through the common societal practice of infant baptism, people moving from one church to another, or people who “return” to church for one reason or another. We do not have much of a track record of drawing in the total newcomer, the one starting from “ground zero”. Ours is a demographic reality of two and three generations who have never experienced or participated in church, ever. We can no longer rely on people coming back to church – they were never here.

Warm, inclusive, community and strong welcoming are critical - but ‘welcoming’ is only the first step in the miraculous journey of becoming the story we tell. To be the Church, do we have any choice but to receive seekers and nurture a path of relationship, forging a creative space of encounter, experience, and discernment? Belonging to the body is, after all, a *metanoia* – a “turning around”. To come to the font is a freely chosen act of great courage. This “Passover” entails life-long conversion, turning from the idols and addictions of our age and embracing a whole new way of being. We become the hands of Christ in the world, nourished at his Table. Christian communities are called to become communities of listening and discernment as we walk with new friends. Surely it is our vocation to cultivate a path of exploration for those listening for the call to join him in his death and so share in his resurrection. What are the consequences of a forever-dry font – other than the life of the cosmos?

This October, Journey to Baptismal Living (North American Association of the Catechumenate) will offer an intensive weekend of experience and training for parish teams to help foster such communities of transformation. The weekend, hosted by the Anglican Studies Program Saint Paul University, and Saint Matthew's Anglican Church and supported by the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa and the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada will include:

- the sharing of and leadership of liturgical rites,
- small group formation,
- theological reflection,
- formation for leaders,
- faith conversation and listening skills. And
- fellowship and opportunity for ongoing access to resources and community dialogue.

Parish teams of 3 or more are encouraged to participate and experience this renewed vision of the Church. For more information:
journeytobaptism2018.eventbrite.com

It is not easy. It takes the commitment of a whole community, and the “long view.” Yes, baptism makes a claim on us. We all want life, but how do we discover that life is found through sharing in His death? As Paul asks:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

(Romans 6:3-4)

Go to: journeytobaptism2018.eventbrite.com

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