

Everybody's Got Something to Offer

The Rev. Lisa Smith Fiegel, DEM

You might have heard this little ditty from the Christian group Dakota Road, "Everybody's got something to offer, young and old the prince and the pauper." You can [listen or download it here](#). It's a fun, upbeat tune, and it captures a truth about both individuals and congregations.

All people have gifts, all congregations have gifts. Another word for that is "assets," which came up a number of times in a recent synod stewardship training event, called "Ventures for Steward Leaders." Sometimes congregations get so focused on what they don't have (money, volunteers, etc) that they forget to focus on the assets and resources they do have.

Asset-based thinking isn't new, but it can be easy to forget when we're in a scarcity mindset. Asset-based thinking is an abundance mindset. We remember that God, the great giver, has gifted us with so much already. We are invited to be open about how the Holy Spirit may use what we already have to work God's purposes and mission through us.

Those assets might be obvious, such as a church building or a core group of gifted lay leaders. Or they might be out-of-the-box assets. There's a story of a congregation who had a retired man who really loved putting together model airplanes and teaching others how to do the same. That church was in a neighborhood where after-school programs for kids were needed. This resulted in the creation of an after-school program where that volunteer (and others) shared their gifts with kids who need a place to go and activities to do. Another congregation received a donation of thousands of granola bars. After they got tired of eating them at fellowship events, they decided to hand them out at the college across the street from their church. What resulted were relationships and connections with young adults there that grew into a worshipping community at the college. Model airplanes and granola bars are assets that furthered God's work in the world! What assets might your congregation have?

I saw a page on a congregation's web site once that really struck me. It was a small, ethnic-specific congregation in the Lower 48. The web page had two columns: What We Can Use, What We Can Offer. In the first column were typical things a struggling congregation might need: financial gifts, non-perishable foods for fellowship hour, hymnals, folding chairs, paper goods and more. The second column was full of engaging ideas, such as: a home-cooked ethnic meal for your congregation's small group, a guest speaker for your congregation from our faith community, an invitation to worship with us in our unique style, hand-made crafts from our members for your silent auction, and many more. I was taken by the strength and willingness to both ask for what was needed and boldly offer the assets this congregation had that could benefit others.

Everybody (and every congregation) has got something to offer. Want to read more about asset-based thinking or use this as a ministry tool? Try these links and ideas:

*Read the book "The Great Permission," which is an asset-based field guide for congregations. It would make a great read for a small group or congregational council. You can order these from ELCA churchwide at: http://resources.elca.org/Stewardship-Great_Permission_Asset-based_Field_Guide.html

* After you read “The Great Permission,” do a workshop around the theme with this free guide:
http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/The_Great_Permission_Workshop_Design.pdf?_ga=1.78544925.846031440.1430504043

* Do a simple SWOT analysis in your congregation. SWOT stands for “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.” Brainstorm ideas in each of these categories and discuss where God might be calling your congregation based on what you hear.

* Hold a ministry fair to showcase all the things you are already doing as a congregation and inviting people to participate (share their gifts)

* Check out several versions of individual spiritual gifts inventories here:
<http://www.elca.org/Resources/Stewardship>

You are always welcome to contact me, Rev. Lisa Smith Fiegel, director for evangelical mission, for more ideas or to facilitate an asset inventory or process in your congregation. Contact me at 907-272-8899 or alaskadem@gmail.com