

MOVING *FORWARD* SERIES PART I –

“CHURCH FUNDAMENTALS”

MARCH 21 (SUN.), 9:15AM/MARCH (THU.) 25, 7:00PM, 2021
ST. JOHN'S UCC, NORWOOD YOUNG AMERICA, MN

PRESENTER: REV. SHUJI MORIICHI, M.A., M. DIV.,



MOVING *FORWARD* SERIES PART I –

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Gathering Hymn

Here in this place

Text: Marty Haugen, 1981

(Music: Marty Haugen, 1981)

1. Here in this place, new light is streaming,
now is the darkness vanished away.

See, in this space, our fears and our dreamings,
brought here to you in the light of this day.

Introduction – Moving *Forward* Series

- **“Church Fundamentals” (Part I)** features several general traits and practices present in healthy and thriving churches. Although not specific to St. John’s, those “fundamentals” likely help prevent common problems that often plague many churches of different types from occurring.

- **“Tips for Pastoral Search” (Part II, in April, 2021)** features several specific “tips” for churches in a transitional phase seeking a new pastoral leader. Although not specific to St. John’s, those tips likely help prevent some of the common pitfalls from occurring in many pastor-parish relationships.

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“Fundamentals” are important for churches at all levels and of all types, small or large, urban, suburban, or rural, UCC, Lutheran, Baptist, Catholic, or Pentecostals, new or old, meeting in a sanctuary or meeting in an old warehouse, etc.



MOVING FORWARD SERIES PART I –

“CHURCH FUNDAMENTALS”

I. GETTING THE PRIORITY STRAIGHT

I. Getting the Priority Straight: God First (and Everything Else Second)

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.” (Luke: 25-28)



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I. GETTING THE PRIORITY STRAIGHT

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. (Deut. 6: 4-7)

For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress. (Ps. 62:1-2a)



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I. GETTING THE PRIORITY STRAIGHT

Have you seen this?

This is the latest banner created and distributed to local churches by the national/denominational office of the United Church of Christ.

BE THE CHURCH

Protect the environment.

Care for the poor.

Forgive often.

Reject racism.

Fight for the powerless.

Share earthly and spiritual resources.

Embrace diversity.

Love God.

Enjoy this life.

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I. GETTING THE PRIORITY STRAIGHT

“TRANSCENDENCE”

“HOLY”

“ALMIGHTY”

“ETERNAL”

“AWE”

Something **BIGGER** than who we are and our immediate concerns



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II.THE CHURCH DOES NOT EXIST FOR ITS MEMBERS*

II.The Church Does Not Exist for Its Members*

**Note: Caring for its members is extremely important.*



MOVING FORWARD SERIES PART I –

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II. THE CHURCH DOES NOT EXIST FOR ITS MEMBERS*

I. Caring for one another is extremely important (rituals, life cycle recognitions, pastoral care, visitation, etc.)...



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II. THE CHURCH DOES NOT EXIST FOR ITS MEMBERS*

...and yet, there is a **greater “reason of being”** for the church (and “meeting different needs of its members” cannot dominate the church’s attention and energy).

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II. THE CHURCH DOES NOT EXIST FOR ITS MEMBERS*

2. The church exists for “others.”

- ❖ Who has not heard the gospel yet?
- ❖ Who lives at the society’s margin?
- ❖ Who needs protection from injustice and exploitation?

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II. THE CHURCH DOES NOT EXIST FOR ITS MEMBERS*

❖ Who are we called by the Holy Spirit to serve in our community and in the world?

- 1) God comes to this world in the person of Jesus (*Missio Dei*);
- 2) Jesus invites his disciples to join his ministries in this world; and
- 3) The church is sent out to the world to carry out Jesus' ministries to preach the Gospel and proclaim the Kingdom to come - missionary presence of the church

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II. THE CHURCH DOES NOT EXIST FOR ITS MEMBERS*

“Love does not consist of gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction.”

Antoine de Saint-Exupery (1900-1944)



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MOVING *FORWARD* SERIES PART I –

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III. SENSE OF OWNERSHIP VS PRIVATIZATION

III. Sense of Ownership vs. Privatization of the Church's Purpose



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MOVING *FORWARD* SERIES PART I –

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III. SENSE OF OWNERSHIP VS PRIVATIZATION

Sense of Ownership

- ✓ Creates cohesion among members
- ✓ Generates participation and commitment
- ✓ Promotes responsibility

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III. SENSE OF OWNERSHIP VS PRIVATIZATION

“Privatization” of the Church’s Purpose

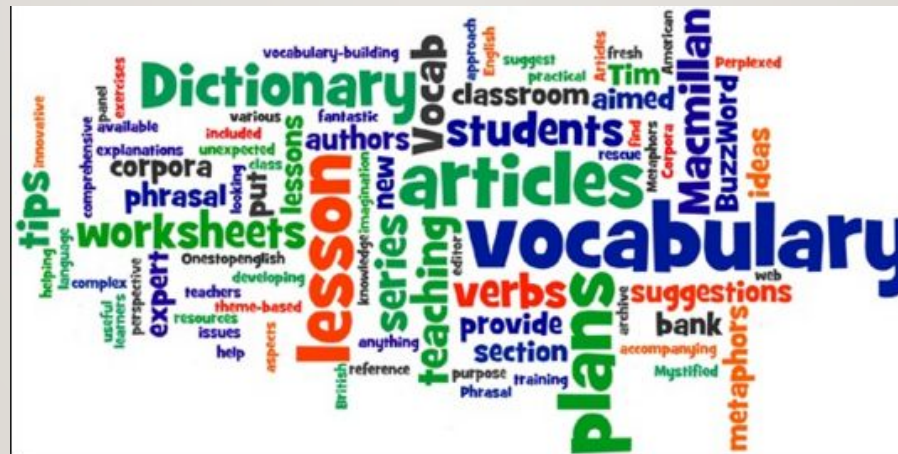
- ✓ Identifies a ministry program or task with the person’s ego
- ✓ Separates one function of the church from others
- ✓ Leaves some areas “untouchable” and unaccountable.

MOVING FORWARD SERIES PART I –

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IV.ACQUIRING A (NEW) COMMON VOCABULARY

IV. Acquiring a (New) Common Vocabulary – Beyond Personal Needs and Wants



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MOVING *FORWARD* SERIES PART I –

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IV.ACQUIRING A (NEW) COMMON VOCABULARY

Do we have a **common vocabulary** to talk about the church, to assess the situations, to discuss the present and the future, besides “meeting different individual needs”?



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IV.ACQUIRING A (NEW) COMMON VOCABULARY

(Sample Questions)

- ❖ “What helps accomplish the church’s missional goals?”
- ❖ “What advances the Kingdom of God to come?”
- ❖ “What helps the church to proclaim the Gospel more effectively and widely?”
- ❖ “What equips us to live faithfully in this world?”

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V. MINISTRIES BELONG TO THE CHURCH, NOT TO PARTICULAR INDIVIDUALS

V. Ministries Belong to the Church, Not to Particular Individuals



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V. MINISTRIES BELONG TO THE CHURCH, NOT TO PARTICULAR INDIVIDUALS

- Any ministry may come from someone’s inspiration or life story; however, there is no such a thing as “Pastor *X*’s ministry” “This is Mr. *Y*’s program” “That is Ms. *Z*’s ‘baby.’”

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V. MINISTRIES BELONG TO THE CHURCH, NOT TO PARTICULAR INDIVIDUALS

- Ministries, however diverse, need to be recognized and owned by the church collectively, in accordance with its vision and direction.
- Ministries, by definition, are not simply “good things to do” but our contemporary participation in Christ’s ministries in different areas of life.

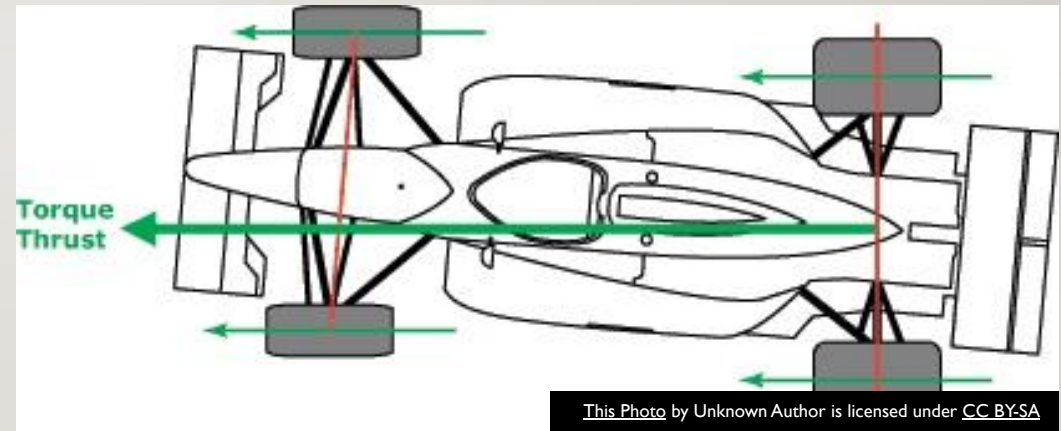


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VI. ALIGNMENT

VI.Alignment



MOVING FORWARD SERIES PART I –

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VI. ALIGNMENT

There are many good things in which the church can engage. However, even good things and good work (programs, events, groups, and committees, etc.) could get the church pulled into many directions, spinning and getting lost along the way...leading hard-working people to wonder ‘Why are we doing this?’”



Various parts must correspond to one another in the same direction, e.g.,

- ☐ The church’s missional call (“For what it is called by God to exist in this world?”)
- ☐ Individual gifts and talents within the body of Christ (strengths as well as limitations)
- ☐ The needs of the world (local and global)
- ☐ Program management (concrete methods and means to carry out various ministries)

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VII. GIFT DISCERNMENT (OR INVENTORY) OVER PERSONAL HISTORIES/ CONNECTIONS

VII. Gift Discernment (or Inventory) over Personal Histories/Connections



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VII. GIFT DISCERNMENT (OR INVENTORY) OVER PERSONAL HISTORIES/CONNECTIONS

Scenario –

There is a growing number of children in the congregation and the consistory decides to create a position of a youth ministry coordinator (with stipend). Three candidates come forward;



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VII. GIFT DISCERNMENT (OR INVENTORY) OVER PERSONAL HISTORIES/CONNECTIONS

A. is a relatively new member with a prior experience in youth mentoring program in her prior church in Chicago (and her college major was child psychology, taking courses at a near-by seminary)-

B. is a former youth program coordinator who has been inactive in the church since the previous pastor left (he now seems interested in returning to the church after having heard of this newly created position) -

C. is a long-time member (who was an occasional nursery attendant in the past) who happens to be your mother/father/sister/brother/cousin/your high school classmate -



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VII. GIFT DISCERNMENT (OR INVENTORY) OVER PERSONAL HISTORIES/CONNECTIONS

Question:

Who would you endorse as the best candidate
for the program’s success?



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VII. GIFT DISCERNMENT (OR INVENTORY) OVER PERSONAL HISTORIES/CONNECTIONS

- ❖ The congregation (at a leadership level) must have a clear grasp of individual gifts (i.e., talents, skills, life experiences, passion, etc.) among its members and appropriately match them with its ministry needs.

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VII. GIFT DISCERNMENT (OR INVENTORY) OVER PERSONAL HISTORIES/CONNECTIONS

- ❖ The church’s successful ministries and the individual members’ senses of flourishing must come hand in hand.



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CONCLUSION

These are just some of the fundamentals that the church must practice and embody.

These are no “fancy moves” or “revolutionary ideas” and do not create immediate results. And yet, these fundamentals build the steadiest and surest way to fruitful spiritual experiences and successful ministries in the church.

Let’s keep the conversation going...

Soli Deo gloria

Shuji M.

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CONCLUSION

Sending Hymn

The church's one foundation

AURELLA

Text: Samuel J. Stone, 1886

(Music: Samuel S. Wesley, 1864)

2. Elect from ev'ry nation

yet one o'er all the earth,

her charter of salvation:

one Lord, one faith, one birth.