

LutheranRenewal

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Pentecost opened the way for all of God's people to have an assignment, a dream to fulfill, a destiny to walk into. It was no longer a season for just the priests to be priestly or for the prophets to have a vision: "Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams" (Acts 2:17). And the dreams that God gave to His people, ordinary people, changed—and still change—everything.

They change our pastor.

The pastor used to do most things—run the church, keep the program going, send out fliers about the big event at the church, keep the people active at church meetings. The goal was to get as many of the people to the church as possible. But with dreams, it changes the focus for the pastor to be the releaser of the people's dreams, and that happens almost exclusively out there in the world, not in here in the church building. Few people have dreams that focus on the church site. The pastor becomes a promoter of people, not a facilitator of programs. Instead of the team trying to help the pastor to win, the pastor, now a coach, helps the team to win. It is the reverse of the way we used to do it. In fact, we may start ordaining other people, because we are saying that they are just as called as the pastor is, and some of the really important meetings are taking place out there, not in here.

They change our direction.

We're going out of the church, not into the church. Instead of trying to get people to church, we're trying to get the church to the people. If the church is who we are, not where we are, getting the church to people is easier than getting the people to church. We tried having "Good Neighbor Sundays." It hardly ever worked. Not even the pastors got their neighbors to church, although they sometimes made us feel guilty for not getting ours there. Good Neighbor Mondays are a smarter idea. We may be better off if we get people to our homes than to our church, because they would probably be more relaxed and it would be simpler.

They change our identity.

We are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. We used to spend more of our time at church. We didn't want to be worldly, and we thought that if we stayed out of the world, we wouldn't be. We found out that the worldly people Jesus had most trouble with were the ones who never went into the world. So now we go into the world, but with a different focus. It's hard to be the light of the world if you're never there. We used to shine our light at one another—in prayer meetings and congregational activities. Nothing wrong with that; it just isn't who we are. We're building our confidence now that we can impact the world as we are out there, not in here. Light wins every time over the darkness, so we truly believe that being at Starbucks or helping our neighbor with his car is what we are called to do. We are salt, and the only way that we can flavor the food is by contact, not by isolation. We let our light shine so that they can see our good works, not just hear our good words.

Dreams
Change
Everything



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Lutheran Renewal

(Independent of North Heights Lutheran Church)

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They change Sunday.

Sunday used to be “the big event.” We geared up for it. The pastor worked for five to fifteen hours crafting a well-polished message that people forgot by Sunday afternoon. We practiced during the week to get ready for “the main attraction.” Our focus was, “Be your best on Sunday. Sing your best, preach your best, look your best, serve your best.” But now the main event happens on Monday, out there. So instead of Sunday being the goal, it is the means. Monday is the goal, so Sunday has become a training day. It is when we meet together and get ready for Monday. Sunday has switched from entertainment to equipping. Entertainment is too strong a word, but that is the way it sometimes felt. We would spend lunchtime evaluating the entertainment—how well did Sally sing, how well did Pastor John preach, how well did the instrumentalists play. We still work hard to make Sunday all that it can be, but our goal is the other six days. So we are asking: How is Sunday preparing us for the rest of the week? Is it training us? Is it making a difference? Is it doing more than just lifting a bit of guilt or giving an hour of inspiration?

They change our gifts.

We used to think that the gifts were for us. We spoke in tongues to build ourselves up, and we prophesied to encourage one another. We discerned the presence of dark spirits to help someone overcome depression. The focus was mainly internal, not external. We hardly ever thought of our gifts functioning primarily outside the church rather than in the church. We usually prophesied and prayed for the sick at the church site. Prophecy seldom happened at home. We just weren't geared up that way. But all that has changed. Now we understand that our gifts are for them, because our dreams are taking us to them, to the broken teens coming from abusive families, to the elderly in rest homes, to potential young moms who just had an abortion, to the homeless poor who have no hope. We need the gifts of the Spirit so that we can do our jobs, fulfill our destinies, realize our dreams, finish our assignments. So the church has become a filling station, a place where we can get what we need to travel to the important places we're going to the next week. In the book of Acts, the gifts of the Spirit were for people the disciples had never met before, not only for the Christians behind the closed doors. This means that we are more desperate than ever for the Spirit, because anything can happen—anywhere.

They change our song.

“Every time I feel the Spirit moving in my heart, I will pray....” Well, that is what I used to do. When the Spirit came to a prayer meeting, that meant a longer prayer meeting. We said, “Come, Holy Spirit,” so it would have been strange to leave when the Spirit came, but that is what we do now. We got our tip from the disciples in the upper room. They prayed for ten days. When the Spirit finally came, they left. Dreams move the Spirit out from the prayer meeting

to the hospital, to the school, to the convalescent home, to the teen delinquency center, to our homes. Our prayer meetings were comfortable places. We cloistered there together binding the devil and telling God to go do our work for us. We sometimes wondered why He didn't. Now we're convinced that He expected us to team up with Him. As Paul said, “I planted, Apollos watered, and God gave the increase.” We used to think like realtors that location is one of the most important things for a church because it is true for a business, but now we have concluded that our location out there is more important than the church's location. It's funny, but the places that hardly think about church buildings or good locations are growing the fastest. In fact, some (like in China) have to try to hide their location rather than expose it to the public. So now we sing, “Every time I feel the Spirit moving in my heart, I will go!” Dreams have changed everything. Pentecost made it that way.

“We're going
out of the
church, not
into the
church.”



If you would like to schedule a “Dream Day” with Paul Anderson, please e-mail him at: panderon@aol.com.