

Lent Presentation for Christ & Grace Church, Petersburg, VA

March 7, 2017

The Rev. Bill Queen

Introducing the Tuesday Lent Series

For our Lent Series this year we are intentionally trying something new; instead of having only clergy, and not giving them a specific theme to address, I'm the only clergy speaker this year, and the remaining weeks will have four members of our congregation who are involved in community organizations as our speakers

Our theme this year is "Let us go forth to do the work the Lord has given us to do"; that is a quote from one of our post- communion prayers that ends our worship and reminds us of why we worship--as a preparation for doing God's work out in the world

This theme was selected for two reasons: first, to remind us that clergy are not the only people who do ministry; and second, that ministry must also happen beyond the walls of our churches, if we are to make any difference in our world; also important to note that valuable community ministries may be inspired by one's Christian faith and be expressed in a secular organization, or in a secular capacity; we will see how that plays out for each of our speakers in the weeks that follow

I want to share with you the big picture, as I see it, of what every church is facing these days; in ancient times the only way to be a faithful person was to be a monk, a nun, or a priest; they lived in cloistered communities, away from the world, and their job was to pray for that outside world;  
picture that cloistered life

Then a big change occurred with the Protestant Reformation; the definition of a faithful person changed; the new way to be a faithful person was to be an active member of a church; people lived out in the world, but primarily exercised their lives of faith within those church communities; churches did outreach ministries,

but the the main job of faithful people was primarily that of growing and strengthening those churches as institutions; picture that previous cloistered life as turned inside-out, as faithful people no longer separated themselves from the world, but based their Christian life in churches

Now we are in the middle of a big change that we don't even have a name for, but it is as big a change as the Protestant Reformation; and the definition of a faithful person is changing again; now many faithful people don't necessarily become members of any church; people exercise their lives of faith without reference to a church community; many faithful people see their main job now as working directly with people and institutions in need out in the community; picture that previous church-focused life as now being turned inside-out

To respond to this change, we need to keep our eyes open to new ways of doing ministry, new ways of interacting with faithful people who are not members of any church, and new ways of interacting with non-church organizations in our communities; keep this picture in mind for the next four weeks