



Bo's Blog

Being archivist for the east side of our annual conference, I get to look at all kinds of old committee minutes, and conference journals. Sounds exciting, doesn't it? Actually, it is, because one thing I've noticed in reading through those minutes and journals from 100 years ago is how much energy and excitement there was in the church then. They had more teachers than they had Sunday school classes. They didn't have enough rooms for the classes they had. They had more clergy than they had churches to which they could send them. They were always adding more classrooms, starting new classes, founding new churches. You can sense in those pages this strong desire to share the good news they had with others.

The opportunity is still there for this kind of energy. Those who do research on such things tell us that well over half the people around us don't have a church. But somewhere along the way our attitude about our faith has changed. Somewhere in the 1940's, 50's, or 60's, mainline churches shifted from being evangelistic (which is this urgent desire to share their good news), to being conservationists (maintaining their buildings and programs). That's quite a shift, when you think about it. It's not just being less pushy about "sharing your witness." It's about a shift from being proactive and active, to being reactive. Jesus spoke about it as hiding a light under a bushel. Or we might think about it as putting our light away for a rainy day, or putting it in a protective case so nobody can disturb it.

The purpose of the light is to guide us and others through life. It does no good if it is hidden, or protected, or saved for later. There are people around us – neighbors, co-workers, friends, and family – who need it now to help them through a dark time. We worry a lot about imposing our beliefs on others, but we don't have to. Just by letting them know you go to church, or that you are a Methodist (or Presbyterian, or Catholic, or simply a Christian) opens up a new realm of discussion between you. I've found that many who are "un-churched" or who have left the church in which they grew up have questions about faith, religion, theology, and God. I've learned a lot from their questions. And if you feel out of your depth, you have permission to say to them, "I don't know the answer to that question, but my pastor loves to explore these questions and ideas. Let's ask him!"

It's not about making ourselves uncomfortable, or making others uncomfortable with us. It's about deepening our relationships with others, being available for each other in time of need, and deepening our relationship with God at the same time. It's about recapturing the idea that the "Good News" is supposed to feel like it is something good for us, which will make it something we will think of as good for others too.

So this is an invitation to get excited. Invite someone new into this part of your life. We have a lot of things going on here in the coming months – John Nilsen on the 17th, Paul Jeffrey next month, worship services, the Country Fair, Advent events. Let God's light shine.

Shalom,
Bo