

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”
-Romans 12:2

Transformation is something that happens around us and to us all the time. As we go through life, our bodies change, our families change, our neighborhoods change, our jobs change, our attitudes change, our lives change. In fact if they didn’t I think we would be pretty bored. If there is so much transformation taking place around us, all the time, it would only make sense that transformation needs to take place in the church as well.

The Bethlehem congregational council has recognized that need and on September 15, we voted to recommend to the congregation that we explore Transformational Ministry. Our synod has a Transformational Ministry team (of which I am a member) that works with congregations to transform their ministry to be more effective in the lives of their members and in the life of their community. This free resource of our Northeastern Ohio Synod provides training, mentors, coaches and resources to participating congregations to help them rediscover who they are as children of God. The handbook for Transformational Ministry says that it “is not a program with a distinct conclusion. It is a journey made by individuals and faith communities as they live out the gift of Christ in their lives and answer the call of Jesus to follow him and do his work.” Transformational Ministry is not a fail-proof solution to get more butts in the pew and bucks in the plate. It is not a formula or new program that congregations can follow to find the answers to all of their problems. But, instead it is a toolbox full of resources to help members of congregations recognize how God has transformed their own lives. Through prayer and Bible study, it starts on an individual level and spreads to a congregational level and spreads even more to a community level. Transformational Ministry is different for each congregation depending on the makeup of its membership and history and the context of its neighborhood or community.

Transformational Ministry has the potential to change our lives and breathe new life into our congregation. Over the next few months you will be receiving more information about Transformational Ministry, and at our congregational meeting in February you will have the chance to vote and make a commitment to the process. In the meantime, please join me in praying and listening for God’s voice.

Being changed with you,
Pastor Shields