

Vision of Ministry

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Ministry is about creatively serving, equipping and leading a community of disciples as they participate in God's work in the world. This expression is broad enough to encompass several forms of ministry, but powerfully illuminates the goals of each type as it is expressed in the church. The expression describes how I envisioned my ministry to a community of youth, and as I move forward into a preaching ministry role it provides direction and vision for ministry to a broader community.

Service is the heart of ministry. Mutual service should fill the Church and mark the community as the body of the Christ who came as a servant. The spirit demonstrated in Jesus' life and death leads us to live with the same sacrificial willingness both in relationship with each other and with the greater community. The various forms of ministry that we see as professional vocations within the church should be seen as focused and supported roles of service, not privileged positions of status. Disciplined sermon preparation, pastoral ministry and community building roles all require a commitment to energetic service. A ministry paradigm dominated by service allows for a flexibility of role, but demands a commitment to meeting needs wherever they arise within the body. Serving the church means offering myself to her, following the example of Christ.

However, service is a role for the entire church, and not a selected part of it. Thus one of the roles of ministry is the equipping of the entire church community to live lives of service. Preaching ministry proclaims the gospel, and embedded within the gospel is the mandate to become servants led by the example of Jesus. In proclaiming the full word, ministers prepare fellow disciples to use their own gifts in service, and work to make the church aware of service opportunities and challenges. Preaching also encourages the church by highlighting places where Christ's spirit of service has become evident within the body. By envisioning equipping as a major function of preaching ministry, I recognize that the proclaimed word works to shape and sanctify the church who receives it. Also, this provokes me to think critically about what the church and individuals within it are being prepared to do.

The leadership function of ministry includes many such questions. I understand the church to be ultimately led by the Holy Spirit through the ministries of several leadership roles. Thus I do not envision the preaching role to necessitate a solitary approach to leadership, but an approach that is deeply collaborative with church shepherds, deacons, teachers, and other staff ministers. However, collaboration must not be an excuse for disengagement, and in my preaching ministry I hope to lead by energetically participating in the process of discerning, developing and communicating vision for the entire congregation. Through challenging preaching moments, I will work to encourage the body to own, personalize, and pursue the church's vision.

I believe strongly that all three of these functions are creative acts. While creativity is often relegated to visual or performance arts, I use the word in a broader sense. Serving, equipping, and leading all have the possibility to create new life in communities that have become

damaged, discouraged, or de-energized. To do these things creatively requires discipline and intentionality. It is an approach that takes each task and attempts to accomplish it in the most life-giving way possible for all the parties affected. Reconciling broken relationships, determining wise policy positions, determining productive goals and developing powerful sermons all benefit from a creative paradigm. As a preaching minister I will pursue a faithful and life-giving response to every opportunity, so that the community with which I work can be blessed and actively bless the community around them.