

INTERFAITH INSIGHT

A Christian perspective on service: A 'clear-eyed' truth

As a part of the Year of Interfaith Service, this is the third in a series of Insights on various religious perspectives on service.

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Soren Kierkegaard prayed, "Lord, give us weak eyes for things which are of no account and clear eyes for all thy truth."

Within the heritage of Christian faith, we have been given clear eyes for the essential truth that we are called to serve God by serving others. We are to use all of our gifts in that service, the love of God and neighbor.

Concluding a series of teachings late in his public ministry, Jesus taught his followers the

requirement to care for "the least of these," Jesus' designation for the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick and imprisoned in society. (Matthew 25:31-46)

Jesus' teaching was a "clear eyed" truth. When you care for "the least of these," you care for me, he taught.

When you fail to care for these who have the greatest needs, you fail to care for me.

In the spirit of Jesus' teaching, we will be judged by how we serve in response to God's love revealed in Christ Jesus to meet human needs, to care for the sick and the aged, to advocate for dignity and justice for all people, to work for peace and reconciliation among nations and peoples, and to stand with the poor and

the powerless, committing to their needs.

The call to serve others is the call to join in God's creative and redeeming work in the world.

In my flavor of the Christian community, we lift up the heritage of the 16th century reformer Martin Luther who taught that, "Christians are perfectly free, subject to none, and dutiful servants, subject to all."

Luther advocated for a rich sense of vocation for the whole people of God, teaching that as recipients of the extravagant love and grace of God, we are bound to extend that love and grace to our neighbors.

He reminded the people of God that the care of "the least of

these" was not optional, but a key element of our response to God's love and grace through lives of faithful service.

In Grand Rapids, we have embarked on a "Year of Interfaith Service," seeking to employ the calls to service of the many faith traditions in our community into a call to build bridges of understanding through acts of service together.

At Trinity Lutheran Church, we have the privilege of hosting homeless neighbors for a week at a time through our partnership with the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Family Promise.

A wonderful development in the last couple of years has been the partnership we now have

with Jewish friends from neighboring Congregation Ahavas Israel, who have joined us in providing meals and hospitality for our guests.

In the commonality of our call to service, we do our small part to stand against division and hate in our world by joining hands for a common good in our community.

Surely, as we work together for the betterment of our neighbors' lives, we are part of the ongoing work of our Creator God.

And as we join in serving "the least of these," our simple efforts in this "Year of Interfaith Service" stand as a visible sign of "clear eyed" unity in our divisive and troubled world.

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