

**“Who We Are”
Bethel Lutheran Church
May 16, 2010**

Update on Intentional Interim Ministry.

This is a time to look at how congregation operates. The **insight** and **tools** gained during this time are invaluable for living/working in mission together. So this process is not just about filling a staff position – it is about *you*.

- * First phase – conversation, education and identifying issues to be addressed.
- * Second phase – gather congregation-wide input for Bethel’s Mission Profile. Call Committee prepares and sends Mission Profile to Synod (by end of summer).
- * Third phase – Synod provides candidates; Call Committee interviews and identifies candidate for call; congregation votes on candidate; new associate pastor called (by end of year).

Congregational lifecycles. From *birth* and *infancy* to *adolescence* and *prime*, from *maturity* to “*aristocracy*” and “*bureaucracy*” to *death* – these are the stages of congregational life. This lifecycle isn’t about chronological time, but about the relationship between four elements in the community’s life together: *energy*, *programs*, *administration* and “*inclusion*.” (EPAI) The letter is capitalized when that element is dominant, and lower case when it is recessive.

Birth: (Epai) Energy predominates in hope and enthusiasm.

Infancy: (EpaI) Survival needs dictate that Inclusion rise to match Energy.

Adolescence: (EPai) Energy poured into Programs, less focus on inclusion.

Prime: (EPAI) High Energy, vibrant Programs, solid Administration and Inclusion of members and newcomers. Visionary yet programmatic.

Maturity: (ePAI) High regard for “tried and true.” Stable, but energy waning.

Aristocracy: (epAI) Less momentum for programs; efficient, but lower energy; Inclusion now focused internally rather than externally.

Bureaucracy: (epAi) Turf wars arise; focus on Administrative procedures; little energy.

Death: (epai) Administrative maintenance is not enough.

The life cycle is not necessarily linear, and ministry happens – by the power of the Holy Spirit – at every point in the life cycle.

Leaders who attended a workshop earlier this year agreed that Bethel is in the “**aristocracy**” phase, or even moving toward “**bureaucracy**” phase – so our goal is to re-energize and re-focus toward a more open and active phase of ministry.

“Who We Are”

Bethel Lutheran Church

May 23, 2010

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Systems thinking. Everyone in the system (family, classroom, church, workplace, etc.) plays a role in the system.

Congregational size and style.

* **Family church** (up to 50 members): Usually has a strong matriarch and/or patriarch who helped found the congregation. The pastor will have effective input if s/he has the support of the matriarch/patriarch. People tend to join in family units.

* **Pastoral church** (50-150 members): People are drawn by the pastor, who may have been instrumental in starting the congregation. Pastor must delegate, particularly as the congregation grows, but generally maintains a relationship with most members. Possible danger is development of a “cult of personality” surrounding a charismatic pastor.

* **Program church** (150-350 members): Pastor(s) must train, delegate and support staff and committees, and provide vision. Clear mission and strong lay leaders support the program church. The pastor(s) no longer can maintain relationships with all members.

* **Corporate church** (350-500 members). Prestigious/charismatic lead pastor, multiple and complex staff and committees and structures, grand-scale worship. Staff driven. May have school or retirement facilities. Small groups essential to people feeling connected.

(More than 500 members is a **mega-church**.)

Bethel, with around 340 people attending any given Sunday, is a “program church” by *size* – but does it *operate* as such? Bethel was once “corporate” size; do members still expect paid staff, rather than volunteers, to implement programs and services? Bethel was “pastoral” size at its inception; can pastor(s) still have a personal relationship with every member? What does this all mean for Bethel?