



With Synod Assembly fast approaching, I've been doing a lot of thinking about the body of Christ. Beginning on Thursday, May 30th, the ELCA body of Christ here in Upstate New York will spend three days together hearing about and sharing in a variety of ministries.

There will be voting members from churches large and small, urban and rural, progressive and traditional, as different from each other as day and night. But all of us will be in assembly, connected to one another by the waters of baptism – standing, sitting, praying, and singing at the foot of the cross.

We are one church with many sizes and many gifts, some congregations with large membership rolls and others very small. But if you ask me, God needs us all. I know it's tremendously attractive to be large, but just because you're large, doesn't mean you're healthy. Conversely, just because you're small, doesn't mean you're unhealthy.

Sure, all healthy things grow. But I don't believe that growth is ever as simple as numbers. A pea will never be the size of a pumpkin and a rose will never reach the height of a redwood no matter how much you water them, fertilize them or teach them redwood growth principles. It's just not in their DNA. All healthy, living things reach their optimal size at maturity, then they grow in different ways from that point on. I am convinced more than ever that this is true of the body of Christ and that God needs churches of all sizes.

You are not a failure if your congregation reaches its optimal stage of maturity, then starts growing in ways other than "filled to capacity" seats for weekend services. Yes, we should always be striving to do church better, but what works for one congregation may not and probably will not work for another. In the body of Christ, one size does not fit all.

So, here's a radical thought: What if Jesus doesn't see small churches as part of the problem, but part of his plan? What if it's been his idea all along to populate every corner of the globe with pockets of his followers – some large, most small – so that everywhere you go you find his people?

And what would happen if we realized this truth and got to work with Jesus on planting, supporting and multiplying healthy small churches, alongside our healthy big siblings?

I don't pretend to have the answers for how to do ministry. It just seems to me that if my toes were as large as my leg, it would be really hard to get around. The body of Christ is a beautiful, living being uniquely gifted in more ways than any one of us could possibly imagine!

So, I can't wait to get to Synod Assembly next week. I can't wait to see how my sisters and brothers in Christ, from congregations both large and small are being poured out in love as they follow the One who makes all things new.

Peace in Christ,

Pastor Doug