

## FROM PASTOR MARC'S DESK

One of the best pieces of advice I've ever received in ministry was "If you want people to show up, never underestimate the power of a personal phone call." In my experience in ministry so far (such as it is), I have experienced to be true. Announcements during worship, flyers in the fellowship, and e-mail blasts are all good things, but at the end of the day, if I *really* want someone to show up, nothing makes more of an impact than a good, old-fashioned personal phone call. Or taking them out to lunch. Or coffee. Nothing makes an impression quite like "Wow, so-and-so actually took the time to reach out to me personally."

As time went on, I discovered this lesson went even further. If I took the time to call someone, that made an impression. If I also took the time to identify that person's gifts to them personally, that made an even bigger impression. For example, if someone called me and said, "Hey, Marc. Would you mind teaching confirmation class this year? We desperately need another adult, and no one wants to do it. We're up against the clock. Would you please help us?"

I might feel sorry for that person and say, yes, but I don't know. That sounds a little lame to me. If I heard something like this instead: "Marc, I'm leading confirmation class, and I would really like you to consider being one of my teachers. I saw the way young people genuinely connected with you during Vacation Bible School. I think you have a real gift for this. You would really add a lot to the class."

Well, now suddenly I might really want to do it. I would probably feel flattered to even be asked! I learned a very important lesson while doing this: It's not just important that we ask. **The ways** that we ask matter. The difference between the first example and the second is that the first one kind of says, "It doesn't really matter who does this. We just need someone. Anyone!" The second example says, "Your gifts **matter**."

Of course, this isn't just true of pastors. This is true of all of us. This past week, Pastor Lawrence and I had the privilege of training our new officers of Deacons and Elders. One of the things we learn as Presbyterians is that ministry is not something that any one of us does by ourselves or in isolation. We are (as we say) a "priesthood of all believers." It takes all of us working together, and the ways that each of us invites one another into this ministry together matter.

One of the big refrains over the past year, whether it's been through stewardship season or the "Called to Life" program has been "Your gifts matter." I think we all want to believe that our gifts, our talents, our passions matter. That our lives make a difference in our families, in our neighborhoods, and in our world. There's a real power in reminding one another that this is true in me, and this is true in you.

It takes a little bit more time and energy to reach out to somebody individually to let them know that their gifts matter. Sometimes just sending an email blast or making an announcement is easier, and I get that. But when we do take that time, something else happens, too. It forces us into relationship with one another.

We can't tell someone that their specific gifts matter unless we first know what their gifts actually are, and we can't know what our gifts actually are until we take actually take the time to get to know each other.

We have to develop relationships with one another. We have to be in **community** with each other.

In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul writes, "there are varieties of gifts, but...all these are activated by one and the same Spirit...you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor. 12:4, 11, 27).

When we really live as the Body of Christ with one another, our gifts are not only recognized. They are **activated** by the Holy Spirit. Our passions become activated. The things that we love to do (that we want to contribute) become activated. This week, I would encourage you to reach out to somebody and let them know that their gifts matter. If you don't know someone (or don't know what their gifts are), take them out to coffee. Invite them to share their story with you and to share what their passionate about. Part of being the Body of Christ starts with building relationships with one another, and when we do that, our gifts (and the Body) comes alive.

Peace this week,  
Marc