



# Transformational Questions

NAYIRI KARJIAN, GENERAL MINISTER, LIVING WATER ASSOCIATION, OHIO NORTHEAST, UCC • FEB 18, 2021

A traditional Swedish story tells of a princess who is to marry a dragon. The princess, frightened, seeks the advice of a wise woman who tells her that on her wedding day she is to wear ten beautiful gowns, one on top of the other.

Following a festive wedding the dragon carries the princess to the honeymoon. When he advances toward his bride, she stops him, saying that she must carefully remove her wedding attire before opening her heart to him. He too, she adds, must properly remove his attire.

Taking off the first gown the princess watches as the dragon sheds his outer layer of scaly armor. Although it is painful, the dragon had periodically done this before. The princess then removes another gown, then another. Each time the dragon finds he too must claw off a deeper layer of scales. By the fifth gown the dragon begins to weep copious tears at the pain. With each successive layer the dragon's skin becomes more tender and his form softens. When she removes the tenth gown the dragon releases the last layer of dragon form and emerges as a man, a handsome prince. What happens next? They live happily ever after, of course!

Going beyond the traditional stereotypes the story speaks of transformation about which I wrote last week. Transformational journeys are at the heart of faith as we remove layers of heartbreak toward healing, layers of crucifixion toward resurrection and rebirth. Transformational journeys call for removing layers of attire so that the indispensable core can emerge. I believe during this time of COVID, as we live through the pandemic, God is calling us, the church, to some kind of transformation. I pray that we are not wasting the experience but using it for good as we ponder what is most important in life, individually and collectively as church.

On Tuesday mornings during our ZOOM Check Ins we have been pondering transformational questions that can help us explore the calling of the church at this time and prepare us for purposeful "return."

- What is church and what is its purpose?
- What is most Important to us, the church? What do we value?
- In what way will the "return" be different from the "normal" we knew? How should we prepare for it?
- What are the important things that have come to light during the pandemic that we need embrace?
- What are the unimportant things we can discard?
- What is working well for the church during the pandemic that should be practiced as we move on?
- What layers of meaningless attire can we remove so that the vital, meaningful core can emerge?
- What do people who pass by our church say about our church?
- How is church working for us during the pandemic?
- What does it mean to have church online without walls?
- What are other ways of being church besides Sunday morning worship?
- What one thing, if you stopped doing it now, would have positive impact on your church?
- What do you want your grandchildren to know about your church and how to be church?
- How intentional and purposeful are we as a church?

I invite us to explore these questions, experiment with them, discuss them. When you gather electronically as boards and committees take 15 minutes to discuss one of these questions. Next time you gather try another question. With small steps and small questions let's open ourselves to the transformation to which God has been calling us for the last many years, even as we prepare with intention and purpose for the "return."