



The Church as a Spiritual Community

An invitation to Living Water Association Annual Meeting

NAYIRI KARJIAN, GENERAL MINISTER, LIVING WATER ASSOCIATION, OHIO NORTHEAST, UCC | OCTOBER 15, 2020

What would our local churches look like if they were spiritual communities? This was the question that led us to our 2020 Annual Meeting theme.

The question begs reflection because every now and then, it is essential for us humans, to remember WHO and WHY we are, and WHAT we are doing on this earth. Without clear answers to who, why and what questions we often lose our way. Without a sense of identity, without a clear purpose and directive, we flounder. This is true for us as individuals and as church communities.

In a very fast-paced and fast-changing world, taking time intentionally to clarify WHO and WHY we are, to whom we belong, and WHAT we're doing becomes central to a meaningful life.

I invite you to join us for this year's annual meeting via zoom to reflect on the CHURCH AS A SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY and be inspired by the words of Bishop Yvette Flunder, pastor of City of Refuge UCC, Oakland, CA. Bishop Flunder is also an author, a sought after preacher and speaker who is actively involved in the wider church.

I invite you to reflect on the question – in what way is your local church a spiritual community? What would your church look like if it were a spiritual community with clear responses to – Who, Why and What?

Human communities have a tendency, as time goes by, to become exclusive membership clubs, to serve

members only and make them happy. They become tradition bound and hold on to what is good only for their members. Their only purpose asserts serving the membership who support and pay for the services.

I have learned that if a local church is not attentive to the Spirit, does not have a clear identity and purpose it becomes an exclusive club that serves its members alone, ceasing to become a spiritual community called by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to embody Christ in the world.

A Spiritual community defines itself by the One who has CALLED it into BEing. A Spiritual community is not exclusive but inclusive and expansive. It is not only tradition centered but balances tradition with innovation to remain relevant to the world in which it lives. It is not membership oriented but invites all participants to be part of the life of the community. It is not made up of separate boards, each with their own agenda, but is bound by a common vision and leadership toward a common calling for Who, Why and What. It does not serve itself but the wider community, the needs in its neighborhood, and even the world. A Spiritual community is always in movement as the Spirit guides, inspires and leads it to embody and represent God in the world.

Join us on Saturday, November 7 to reflect, be inspired and do the business of the Association as we continue to discover together where the Spirit is guiding us. Register on our website:
<https://livingwaterone.org/annual-meeting>