

Recently I've been considering statements of vision and mission for churches. I've looked at our own Knox mission statement alongside some from other churches.

Ours is too long. It's a sure bet that most folks at Knox have no idea what's in it, and that no-one at all knows it without reading it. Have a look sometime at the first page of one of the congregation's springtime Annual Reports. You'll see it there. It's the only place I've ever seen it. So we need to turn it into something that actually guides us, something that our people know, something that can be spoken in 15 or 20 seconds.

This got me thinking about a personal mission or vision statement. What's my mission – in my work or, for that matter, in my life?

I went back to some of the work I had done during my sabbatical a couple of years ago. I had written a mission/vision statement for my ministry.

Here it is:

"I choose to **serve** a pastor, priest and prophet with the people of Knox church, so they might **experience** God's abundant love personally and collectively, and **share** that love through worship, mission and living."

I've highlighted the verbs, because it's only in action that a mission or vision becomes real.

This is still a bit too long. It doesn't all come easily to mind. A mission or vision statement is useful when it can be thought of and spoken at any moment, to guide decisions at any time.

So I have some work to do on my own work-related mission statement. I haven't done anything about a broader personal statement. I wonder what that might be?

I expect it would take a lot of thoughtfulness and inner spirit-work to create a useful statement of my personal mission in life. The same is probably true for you.

What about using this season of Lent to do some of that inner work? Could this be a way to tie your life's sense of direction to your faith, as you move closer to faith's dramatic foundation in the story and mystery of Jesus' life, his crucifixion, resurrection and ongoing presence in your intimate connection with God?

Perhaps you and I should actually try this during the remainder of Lent. Let's take a mini-sabbatical. Let's give ourselves some time through the course of the next couple of weeks to look inside and find ideas and words that have something to say about who we are, why we're here, and how we choose to live.

Wouldn't that be a useful thing to have rattling around in your mind?

Prayer: (still on the idea of fasting)

May I ...

fast from judging others, and feast on the image of God within them;

fast from words that wound, and feast on phrases that heal;
fast from idle gossip, and feast on purposeful silence.

Amen.

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