

Living Out Our Lutheran Identity

One-by-One: Revitalizing a Congregation

October 6, 2020



1. Share one thing Pastor Rosenau said that resonated with you.
2. Share one thing Pastor Rosenau said that you found to be thought-provoking (for whatever reason).
3. A popular saying in Christian churches today is, “Don’t just go to church. Be the church.” What do you think they mean by that?
4. Compare what others mean by “being the church” with how Pastor Rosenau described it:

“How about we try having church be church? Church is going to be good every Sunday morning, no matter when the people come, if you invite them.... And we’ll do as many bible studies as we need to do.... Let’s see what happens if we come here to be fed and strengthened by the Word of God and then you go back out into your communities and do those things where you live, and God’s going to use you to be the salt of the earth and the light in the world. And maybe by that he is going to attract people to come here, because I think that’s the church being the church. I think that’s what it looks like when the church is at work.” (<https://vimeo.com/387666461#t=44m>)
5. Read Matthew 5:13-16. Explain what it means to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Matthew 5:13-16 - ¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. ¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Do you think salt-and-light living is more impactful or less impactful today than in years or generations past? Explain your answer.

6. The police chief asked Rosenau, "What makes you different?" Take a minute for personal reflection: What in your life might lead others to ask that question about you? What would you say, if someone asked you that question?

7. Rosenau proposed to his congregation: "For the next 364 days, let's use the Word of God and see what it can do. Either we will gather here again and we will make headlines and prove that God does not do what he says he does, or we will rejoice with a room full of people because he does." (<https://vimeo.com/387666461#t=32m17s>). Read the passages below. What makes this a thoroughly Lutheran approach?

Isaiah 55:10-11 - ¹⁰ As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Romans 1:16-17 - ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Romans 10:13-17 - ¹³ for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." ¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" ¹⁶ But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" ¹⁷ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:18-25 - ¹⁸ For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." ²⁰ Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. ²² Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Luke 16:27-31 - ²⁷ "He answered, "Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, ²⁸ for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment." ²⁹ Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them." ³⁰ "No, father Abraham," he said, "but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent." ³¹ He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead." "

8. List three things that you think stand in the way of our taking and trusting the approach of “using the Word of God and seeing what it can do.”

9. List as many examples as you can from the Gospels of times when Jesus personally, individually ministered to someone. What can we learn from this?

10. How do the following passages reinforce the value of personal one-on-one ministry on the part of Christians and their pastor?

Matthew 25:34-36 - ³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’”

Acts 20:28 - ²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

11. Pastor Rosenau described a three-part plan for revitalizing a congregation:

- 1) Good _____
- 2) Great _____
- 3) A _____ who _____

In your opinion, how does Riverview rate on each one of these? In what specific way(s) do you think we can improve?

12. As Pastor Rosenau evaluated new ideas, he asked, “How is that going to help the church be the church?” What makes that such an important question to ask?