

**Galilee Lutheran Church**  
**MET Update February 1, 2011**  
**The MET Process: The Second Developmental Task**  
**Becoming Clear about Your Identity - or - Discovering a NEW Identity**

The first developmental task of interim ministry pertains to the importance of knowing Galilee's history, how you've gotten to the present, how the past shapes the present. The second developmental task of interim ministry concerns identity

Before we can engage in this task, we need to understand what we are talking about. Roger S. Nicholson, in *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry*, discusses identity and what it means. Primarily, it is how we understand ourselves, how we think about our selves, how we describe ourselves to others. Congregations frequently describe themselves by location, years of existence, staff, ministries, number of members, worship styles, partnerships, staff, etc. Identity can be defined by the use of money and time. Identity also includes things hoped for. Past experiences, present realities and hopes for the future, Nicholson says, all play a role in forming our identity.

The congregation's work in becoming clear about identity is perhaps a bigger challenge than it may initially seem; often gaps exist between perceived identity and true identity. How a congregation perceives itself may not be how someone 'outside' perceives it. In fact, any two members generally have completely different understandings of a congregation's identity.

Notice the second name for this task is "discovering a new identity." Contemplating *doing* something new can be very frightening, let alone *becoming* something new! Let's face it, considering a new identity is threatening! Finding a new identity may imply that you've got something wrong...or that you're were not paying attention to reality. Yet, examining identity grants opportunities for the congregation to remain relevant to the world around us and to new possibilities God provides.

Some questions to ask in the identity discovery process might include:

Does your perception match reality? In what ways has reality changed in the past few years?

What has God been doing in the past 5 years? What is God preparing you for or to do?

How has your neighborhood/world/context changed? What's going on in the neighborhood?

What has changed? What has stayed the same? What are the neighborhood's needs?

How has the congregation changed? (member transitions, deaths, births, new members, age)

What spiritual gifts are present in the congregation today? Do you know what spiritual gifts exist?

What is God calling us to be or do as a community of faith?

This developmental task is about knowing yourselves individually in relation the larger congregation, and individuals knowing the collective whole. It's important to know the factual information (membership, demographics, tenures of previous pastors, needs of the building, etc.) as well the less tangible (vision, mission, perspective, values) and knowing what happens outside Galilee's walls.

Looking at identity acknowledges that, even today, **God is doing a new thing** in the world *AND* in you! This work is bigger than simply being able to articulate what it means to be Galilee Lutheran Church in 2011. Knowing your identity allows you to better begin conversations about calling a pastor, and more importantly, it allows you to engage in effective and relevant ministry in the world today. As Nicholson says, "The task of discovering a new identity is related to discovering your true vocation, that is, that place where one's unique gifts and the world's great needs intersect."

Submitted by:  
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