

At our Annual Council Retreat last January, we prayed for discernment in evaluating leadership needs in our ministries at All Saints. The theme chosen for 2017 has been ***The “BE” Attitudes: Belonging, Believing, Becoming.*** When we demonstrate a Christ-like presence in our witness, people will experience blessings (another B word) through the ways we behave (an additional B word). Like any social gathering and family function, I put the reminder out there: Everybody welcome ... and everybody behave. To me, this is healthy hospitality and demonstrates mutual respect. When we fail to behave in such a manner, it is high time for an attitude-check. What are the right attitudes for our witness and relationships? I submit Matthew chapter 5 as your Beatitudes guide ... the right attitudes to be at ... always.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

Blessed are the persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Most people seek a church essentially to belong, to believe, and to become. For Lutherans, ***Belonging*** often comes first; infant baptism is belonging before believing. We belong to a community of faith, a body of believers, to a family in Christ. Visitors should find friendship, support, and hospitality.

Believing is central to our life together, seeking to reveal God’s presence as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe the Bible is God’s Word to us and how Scripture continues to open doors for ministry.

Becoming is what it means to be created human, growing in mind, body and spirit through the changing seasons of life and faith. We strive to grow into the image God intended for each us, united in Christ to what we’ve been given, taking form in ministry, service, giving, hospitality and love. Those who suffer despair and disability should experience Christ’s healing presence and forgiveness. While you and I cannot always be timely conduits for God’s grace, we certainly don’t want to cause spiritual disconnects. The Beatitudes plant seeds of faith until God brings new fruit.

In order for ***The “BE” Attitudes: Belonging, Believing, Becoming*** to be revealed, each member of All Saints needs to consider four basics of Christian Life:

1. Regular Worship – Our life-giving roots in Scripture-based Services is praise, thanksgiving, growth, Sacraments, community, inspiration and spiritual motivation.
2. Spiritual Growth – Every one of us, oldest to the youngest, should be invested in Christian Education on some level.
3. Personal Ministry – St. Paul declares we are the priesthood of all believers. Let us mutually strive to help people discover their passion, their interests and gifts: teaching, singing, cooking and feeding, healthcare, visitation, prayer chains, organizational leadership, decorating, finance, or construction.

4. Stewardship – God calls each of us to be stewards ... of the earth, our bodies, our relationships, our time and money. We are to take care of what we have been given, invest it wisely, remembering who is the owner. I keep reminding people: Remember who you are and whose you are!

I hope this sounds familiar to you, because I wrote about it in last February' newsletter. Consider this your report card, asking yourselves how you are doing in your calling as saints and witnesses within the congregation and our community at large. If you and I strive to be the kind of people we hope to find in any Christian church, this year's ministry theme shall indeed come to life and bear fruit at All Saints. Do you remember the saints in your life from years past who planted good seeds of blessing within you? What were their attitudes? If this gardening image seems a bit overwhelming, all I'm really asking is for you to "how your own row" in making a positive difference. Imperfect people are able to convey how we are all still perfectly loved ... in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen.