

For more than a year our Resurrection Lutheran Church vision team worked, diligently collecting and compiling data from cottage meetings, community interviews and congregational events they planned, promoted and pulled off.

Countless conversations were culled into a disorderly document helpfully reshaped by Pastor Carol Breimeier, assistant to our bishop, a document that launched church council on an intense weekend of imagination and planning, of editing and arguing, writing and wrestling and tweaking.

This statement of our *Values and Goals* was printed in the newsletter and spoken in worship, and we handed it to the Vision Catalyst we hired especially for this project with grant money we also had to write an application for and entrusted her with the daunting call of getting the likes of us organized.

She has eight months with us, now more than half gone, and after all her phone calls and emails, her attentive listening and perceptive questioning, her weekly meetings and persistent recruiting, she has identified a crackerjack working group...that is not yet working.

They still can't find a date when everyone can meet.

Meanwhile, annual staff reports and occasional side conversations, emails and females describe, lament or excoriate the downturn in personal involvement in ministry in our faith community, where worries that there will not be enough money have turned into worries that there will not be enough people with enough time to do what we have been called by God to do.

Our vision document calls for an increase in participation and a broadening of our reach while our calendars suggest that we are too busy to maintain what ministry we have now.

Sorry, but we can't make it to that meeting or that training or that event or that special service, but we sure do affirm it and are glad it's happening and hope it goes well without us and wish there were more like it as the occasion itself flops flat and unsupported.

And the planner says, the teacher says, the scheduler, the leader, the listener, the vision catalyst says, *I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity.*

The LORD hears.

The LORD stoops and hears the cry of the prophet, and of the non-profit.

No less than the LORD who formed us, who fashioned us and called us together, whose presence and power have guided this congregation and its predecessors for over a century, whose inspiration has emboldened us to worship in English and welcome persons of every sexual orientation and gender identity, to install solar panels on our roof and an unapproved queer woman in our pulpit, to start a preschool and an after school program and a street festival...the LORD who is our strength and our song and the reason we want so desperately to do all that we have dreamed and written down, the LORD has heard our cry from under the weight of too much work and worry and violence and despair and fatigue and busyness and frustration and anxiety and trouble in our streets and trouble in our hearts and time crunch in our lives, and thus says the LORD:

I am calling you to more.

I have read your weighty vision document, and *it is too light a thing.*

It is too light a thing to welcome the visitors who wander in and to integrate the new joiners.

It is too light a thing to be a refuge and sanctuary for Christians unwelcome in other faith communities, whether because of their sexual orientation or critical thinking or criticized lifestyles or political concerns.

It is too light a thing to care for others in the directory, to raise up the tribes of Resurrection and to restore the survivors of its membership rolls; I have given you as a candle to all of Chicago and a light to all the world.

It is too light a thing to deepen the faith and discipleship of the membership, to honor and to expand a bit the service and justice being done when all the earth I love and intend to save hemorrhages everywhere with hatred, hunger, violence, exploitation, oppression, prejudice, disaster, disease and devastation.

My salvation is aimed at the end of the earth, well beyond the scope of even your inclusive vision, all the way from the most distant stranger to the darkest corner of your own heart. You drive yourself crazy as a community, wanting to do more than you reasonably can, and your desire is too light a thing.

I will reshape your understanding of your calling as I once did for my servant sung by Isaiah.

Listen to my servant's well-written vision document:

*The LORD called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me.*

*He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me;*

*he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away...*

*his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him.*

And I said to my servant, *it is too light a thing.*

My salvation is pointed beyond the boundaries of Israel, well beyond the horizon of your imagination, much less your comfort zone.

I will reshape you from a weapon to a beacon, from an arrow to a sun.

You will not be a sharp sword but a shining star, a light to those who loathe you, a blessing to those who bully you.

Your call will be broader and more beautiful than anything you could have dreamed or discerned on your own no matter how early or well I fashioned you, no matter how attentively you listened or faithfully you responded.

Thus says the LORD to the servant in Scripture and the people of Resurrection:

*I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*

And then, the lesson ends, not with a longer to-do list, but with a stronger promise.

It will work.

*Thus says the LORD ... to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers,*

*Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves,*

*because of the LORD, who is faithful,*

*the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.*

Thus says the LORD, to the people who are too burdened and busy, who are overscheduled and overwhelmed, who regret that they just don't have enough time:

Give it time.

In my time, with you and without you, because of you and beyond you, my salvation will reach the ends of the earth, and you, my servant, my light, will be honored for all that you are and all that you do, not because you are so faithful, but because I am, or because you have accomplished enough, but because I have chosen you.