

Honoring the Teaching Ministry

It's that time of year when we begin thinking about how we can best honor and acknowledge our teachers. This takes on different expressions according to the congregational dynamics and might vary from one year to the next. It's not nearly so important as to whether a small plant is given or gift certificates or perhaps a luncheon – the important thing is that it happens! Not only does this acknowledge and express appreciation to the individual but lifts up the importance of ministry of the baptized.

Teaching might be one of the most recognizable forms of lay ministry in church life – while in fact it stands equal to all forms of ministry – it does have a special identity and time frame within which it functions. Never mind it is often hidden in the basement for most of the year – all the more reason to make it visible on a particular occasion.

Much of what we call lay ministry or ministry of the baptized is in fact hidden. At best, it is exercised out there in the midst of daily life – as we seek and serve Christ all persons, respecting the dignity of all humanity and all of creation. This is equally true of all of our relationships and responsibilities in congregational life. These acts of ministry within the church - whether it is teaching, altar guild service, or kitchen duty - are not done necessarily to serve the clergy or staff – but hopefully to honor and please our Lord.

Yet who among us is not human enough to appreciate and welcome the flesh and blood expression of an occasional hand on our shoulder or quiet word – speaking on our Lord's behalf, saying “servant, well done.” At best this does in fact happen along the way in casual affirming comments. But for some personalities this just doesn't come naturally or might not even have been noticed in the focused busyness of church responsibilities.

It's also difficult, if nigh until impossible, for clergy to be present during educational events that take place at the same time as their own worship or teaching responsibilities. Therefore considering personality differences, and complications of presences – protocol is very much the order of the day. Having a set time to recognize and honor those who take on the responsibility of teaching is very important. Words of wisdom say, “if we never say another prayer other than **thank you**, that would be sufficient.” I wonder how important that might be in our congregations?

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