



## DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

7643 Huron River Drive

Dexter, MI 48130

734-426-8480

---

### **EVERY MEMBER A MINISTER!**

~ Scripture: I Peter 4:7-11 & 2:9 ~

*Sunday, Sept 5, 2004*

*By Rev. Steve Bringardner`*

*“And you will be called priests of the Lord,*

*You will be named ministers of our God.”*

- Isaiah 61:6a

### **BRIEF REVIEW OF WHERE WE’VE BEEN SERMON-WISE THIS SUMMER**

#### **CORE**

The central or most important part of something.

The part that contains the seeds (e.g.: apple or pear).

#### **VALUES**

The principles, goals and standards held to be important, useful, desirable, worthy of esteem.

#### **CORE VALUES**

The principles that are at the center. . .that define and drive us. . .that are the most important to us. . .that we believe contain the seeds of growth.

#### **WHAT ARE OUR CORE VALUES AS A CHURCH?**

- God cares for lost people; so should the church
- Small group connections are vital
- We grow closer to God through personal worship
- Corporate worship is a celebration of the living God
- Private acts of mercy witness to our faith
- Corporate acts of justice witness to our faith

- Cultural relevance is not optional
- Prayer is a priority
- Creativity comes from authentic spirituality
- Every member is a minister

## SERMON

Every member a minister? Now, where did we get that idea? From the New Testament. . . .

As we read **I Peter 4:7-11**, we will see that right from the very beginning, there was this idea of *a general ministry of all baptized Christians*:

<sup>7</sup>*The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.*  
<sup>8</sup>*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.* <sup>9</sup>*Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.* <sup>10</sup>**Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.** <sup>11</sup>*If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

Notice the urgency in v. 7. We should live expectantly, because Christ is coming again! It is important to grow in love for God & others. . .to pray regularly. . .to reach out to needy people. . .to invest your time & talents where they will make a difference for eternity.

Everyone has some gifts, talents, aptitudes, passions (things that move us), life experiences. How God is praised when we discover this “mix” and begin to use it to serve Him and help others. That’s when people see Jesus and are drawn to Him.

Then **I Peter 2:9**, there is this (related) notion of *the priesthood of all believers*:

<sup>9</sup>*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

A priest is an intermediary—between God and man. The “*royal priesthood*” is made up of the entire Body of Believers—not just a certain segment (e.g.: Levites). This is not a *title* or *position*, but a *function*—really two functions:

1. To intercede for man before God i.e.: to carry people to God
2. To represent God before man i.e.: to carry God to people (by declaring the praises of Him who called us out of darkness)

That takes all of us being ministers of the Gospel. There is no distinction between “professional” & “lay”. In our church, I often say there are 300+ ministers AND 2 pastors. All of you are priests. All are called to be co-laborers in the field. The H.S. works through you more than Matt or me to accomplish His purpose (i.e.: *to get back what rightfully belongs to Him!*).

Picture a football field. Yes, there are a handful of coaches on the sidelines, but the bulk of action is out on the football field where the players are.

This idea that “*every member is a member*” and that together we are the “*priesthood of believers*” is part of our heritage as Methodists and Wesleyans. John Wesley sent “circuit riders” across two Continents; the Methodist movement spread much like the early church did under Paul’s leadership. He did the same thing (i.e.: go from place to place, establish a church, leave it in the hands of a few carefully chosen leaders and the “laity”, then went off to another place to oversee the work there). The circuit riders might come around only once a quarter (e.g.: to serve sacraments, conduct weddings, etc.). The people of the local church carried on the weekly business of the church (e.g.: worship, teaching, evangelism, social outreach, mission work).

Things haven’t changed. Every member of the Body of Christ—whether you’re a “member” of this local congregation or not—is called as a minister or servant, NOT a volunteer. We have no volunteers here. . .only people responding to God’s call to service and ministry.

**ILLUSTRATION:** If you serve as an usher or greeter, you are not just filling a spot or carrying out a duty that doesn’t seem very significant. You are an essential link in a chain of people that enfolds newcomers into our congregation.

We’ve all been called (chosen) by God to bring Christ to others AND others to Christ. That’s the priestly work of reconciling God & man. And we’re all part of that *royal priesthood*.

**MY CONVICTION:** People want to be involved in ministry that is meaningful. . .ministry that makes a difference. . .ministry in which they feel they are making a significant contribution.

- Perhaps YOU do not know how to go about it
- Or you feel inferior, ill-equipped. . .“How could God use me—I’m too ordinary”
- Or you are overextended in the things of this world

So, how do “ordinary people” hear God’s call and get started in ministry?

How do you get to that “burning bush” where you can hear the voice of God calling?

1. Read & Study God’s Word

- *Come to WTB; get into a small group for 40 Days; take Discipleship-201*

2. Hang Around God’s People

3. Listen for God to Speak Through His People

- ex.: “*I think you work well with people. . . OR you write well. . .OR you’re good with children*”

*“You have a nice voice, why don’t you sing in the choir?”*

(not necessarily something you’ve thought about doing)

4. Listen for His Voice

- “*Incline your ear*” like a dog who is waiting to hear what his master has to say

5. Open Yourself

- “*Here I am, Lord, send me*”

## 6. Act Now!

- *Don't wait for the perfect time, the perfect situation, the perfect setting. God may have you create or re-create something. Just get in there and serve.*
- *Don't wait until you reach a certain level of spiritual maturity. You can grow in your faith-walk with Jesus while serving Him & others!*

## 7. Look at the Needs Around You

- *See what needs to be done. We have a list of "open positions" the Ad Council puts out every month. Don't wait to be asked. Start asking how you might be used to meet a need.*
- *Don't look just around the church, but beyond it. Many are involved in ministries that push beyond our borders (e.g.: Habitat / Haiti / CROP)*

## 8. Share Your Dream With Someone You Trust

- *We need others to see the vision along with us. . .to help us define and refine it. . .then say, "Go for it!" It's great when others can come alongside us. Teams are better than lone rangers.*
- *Be sure you are dreaming God's dream. It's always better to serve out of passion than out of obligation.*

[NOTE: We're developing Discipleship-301 to help all of us find our passions, strengths, and place for ministry.]

In the **14<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Mark's Gospel** is a beautiful demonstration of all that I'm talking about this morning. It occurs just before the Last Supper—which we are about to celebrate. Jesus was only a day or so away from crucifixion. Mary, the sister of Lazarus & Martha, anointed Jesus' feet with a very expensive perfume. She was unduly criticized for her act of devotion by Judas (of all people).

Mary was just an ordinary woman. But she had spent time at Jesus' feet. She knew what was coming, and she just wanted to serve Her Lord. I suppose this "anointing" could have been relegated to a "professional priest", but I'm glad Mary just came on ahead and did it herself! She didn't wait. She just let God use her.

You know, God wants to use you. It doesn't matter how long you've been around here. . .how old you are. . .how insecure or inexperienced you feel.

I believe He's calling several here this morning. I wonder, as a member of the Body of Christ, are you ready? willing? Perhaps you've held back long enough. Perhaps you've made enough excuses. Perhaps you've let enough things get in the way of serving God.

Maybe it's time to let the H.S. "*wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness which has been laid upon us*" [C. S. Lewis' words]. He who knows what you can be can take over your heart, life, schedule, passions—everything about you—and use you in ways you never dreamed possible!

Are you up for it???

## BENEDICTION

Let the rhythm continue: God's initiative. . .your obedience. His plan within. . .your response in action (no matter where the path may lead). God's plan for ministry. . .your call to fulfill that which is deep within you. Go out, and be God's hands and feet in the world.