



## Minding the Gap - February 2015

A Faith and Work Publication

Welcome to Minding the Gap, a monthly thought about faith in the workplace!

### "An Organizational Metaphor 'The Bus' "

Over the last decade and more, the metaphor of "The Bus" has become popular within many of our business, service and educational organizations. It, indeed, has been a helpful way to look at both organizations and individuals within the organization. Questions such as "What is the purpose of 'the bus'?", "What direction is 'the bus' going?", "Should she/he be on 'the bus'?", and, "Is she/he in the right 'seat' (position) on 'the bus'?" can all be very helpful inquiries to making a business/organization and their coworkers more effective.

What delights me is that this metaphor is greatly enhanced by a concept within the Christian tradition. It does so through the concept of "**charis**" (the favor of God). One expression of this divine favor or grace, is the **charisms** of the Spirit - the gifts of the Spirit to individuals. That is to say that our Creator has endowed every one of us with certain abilities or talents for living. However, these gifts are given, not for self-aggrandizement, but for the community's well-being or betterment. One theologian, John Haughey writes in his essay on *wealth & abundance*: "...**charisms** are God's favor that is given, not for those who receive them, but for those who will benefit from their exercise by those who have received them". Haughey's perspective is verified much earlier by the apostle Paul who puts **charis** into the context of life when he wrote: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and varieties of services, but the same Lord and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (I Cor 12:4-7).

This idea is a great challenge to much of the hubris or self-promotion which seems to often "sneak" into, and even dominate, our and others' work practices. Very easily we can begin

to think we're the originators of our abilities and that they're to be used for personal benefit. The immediate perception and eventual end result of this is that everyone is in it for themselves. *Trust, caring* and their accompanying energies created for *risk and sharing* quickly leave the "room". And, we all have a good understanding and experience of what happens to our work setting under such circumstances. However, Scripture (Paul) teaches us as people of faith we have been given a different perspective and challenged to invest our gifts/talents for the enhancement of our coworkers' lives. Perhaps as a guideline for moving in this direction our behaviors need to answer positively, the three simple questions continually asked by our colleagues: Can I trust you? Are you committed? and Do you care about me?

Again, I'm strongly convinced when our co-workers answer the above questions about us positively, then "The Bus" metaphor is a great mechanism for helping organizations to be clear about their purposes and having their members in the right seats.

Blessings to you in your world of work.

- Jim Grubs

Incarnation Lutheran Church, 4880 Hodgson Road, Shoreview, MN 55126