



Minding the Gap - May 2016

A Faith and Work Publication

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

"Diversity - The Good, Bad and Ugly"

When examining this concept there is a great variety of perspective. Often when we experience something **different**, it can create discomfort, danger, fear, etc. However, when our bodies experience health, we have a sense of comfort and peace; and yet, we have that sense precisely because all the **diverse** functions of the body are in balance - providing very different functions but when 'all systems are go' health seems to be the result! In fact, it seems to be a principle of nature that diversity keeps life in balance. Planting the same crop can lead to the crop being ravaged by disease. Dutch elm disease flourished in areas where there was an over abundance of elm trees. **Diversity** in our created world is essential in spite of the fact that it can be experienced in a very **violent or ugly** manner - such as lions preying on gazelles.

On the same trajectory, **diversity** within the Christian tradition scripturally is viewed in a positive light - it is good! Genesis 1:21 speaks of God creating "So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. Again, in I Cor. 12:14, "Indeed, the body does not consist of one member, but of many". Both of these passages giving honor and credence to difference - creation has diversity. There is the wonderful account in Mark and again in Luke 9:49-50 where John reports to Jesus: "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us". But Jesus said to him, "Do not stop him; **for whoever is not against you is for you.**" Here we see Jesus challenging the disciple to step back and look at the issue from a broader perspective. That being: don't assume they're against you just because they're not a part of

your particular group (faith tradition, work group, ethnic group, etc.). Yet, within the Christian tradition we so frequently reject another person purely because their belief varies (is different) from our group's or ours despite confessing Jesus as Lord. Martin Luther King once made the statement that the most segregated hours of the week was Sunday morning when Christians worship.

This past Sunday was Pentecost - celebrating the indwelling of God's Spirit in the lives of Jesus's followers. Act's account of the entire event creates an environment of great confusion, surprise and energy - people speaking in **different** languages, yet understanding one another. Now, **jumping to our work setting**, these elements of **confusion** = a lot of ideas present without any particular direction; **surprise** = seeing an issue or problem in a manner you never have before; **energy** = getting people excited and determined, can truly be evidence of God's indwelling presence and a challenge for us to pursue them even though they are diverse or different from what we had in mind. For certain, we need to reflect and consider that this may well be the Spirit nudging us to open our hearts and minds and to listen carefully. For diversity is good and a key element in bringing resolution and energy to our work.

Blessings to you in your world of work.
- Jim Grubs

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