



The Mission Coordinating Team is proposing that we work with the Center for Parish Development on a Transformation process for a few select congregations in the Presbytery. More information will be coming your way soon, but to help understand what we mean by "Missional Church" in the Transformation process, we are running a series of FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) for the next few weeks.
 REV. RICHARD FRANCIS • MODERATOR • MISSION COORDINATING TEAM

What do you mean MISSIONAL CHURCH?

Frequently asked questions ~ week 7/10



What connection does the missional church concept have with the unique situation churches are facing in North America?

Key to the identity of a missional church is being an alternative society within the dominant culture. When the church proclaims and is a sign of the reign of God – whether by loving enemies or welcoming those on the margins – it will be a contrast community in the eyes of the world. Many Christian traditions that had previously enjoyed a privileged status in the dominant North American culture no longer do. The missional church perspective offers important clues on how to be the church when not at the center of things.



**GOD HAS A MISSION...
 ...AND GOD'S MISSION NEEDS A CHURCH!**

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The First United Presbyterian Church at Atlantic is considering persons for a temporary supply pastorate. Atlantic is a 7,000-population county seat about 70 miles west of Des Moines, 50 east of Council Bluffs. The church membership is approximately 200, with about 75 active. The pastorate could be full-time or part-time and commuting to Atlantic is an option.

Expressions of interest or nominations should be sent to Personnel Committee chair Duane Acker, talycoed@comcast.net, 712-243-4757, or 66344 Troublesome Creek Road, Atlantic, IA 50022

■■■ *mark your calendars*

TRIENNium	JULY 20-24	PURDUE, INDIANA
SYNOD SCHOOL	JULY 25-30	BUENA VISTA UNIVERSITY
MODERATOR TEAM	JULY 27	PRESBYTERY OFFICE 10:00AM
MISSION COOR TEAM	AUG 5	PRESBYTERY OFFICE 11:00AM
CPM	AUG 9	PRESBYTERY OFFICE 9:30AM
PW	AUG 9	LAKESIDE PC 9:30AM
COM	AUG 10	PRESBYTERY OFFICE 10:00AM

I was out last week pulling weeds in the flowerbed under the tree and got to thinking, not for the first time, about how the Church can be more like a weed than a flower or a fruit tree.

Every time I try to get rid of the weeds I marvel at how resilient they are. Most of the time you don't really pull them out by the roots; you break them off, and they'll just happily regrow. They not only survive but thrive in conditions that would kill any plant you really want to grow. Can you imagine trying to get a tomato plant to grow out of a crack in the sidewalk? Yet I've seen crabgrass flourishing on a cement surface hot enough to fry an egg. The deadliest herbicide known, which is most familiar under the trade name Roundup, is supposed to leave any area where it's sprayed totally devoid of plant life. But I've gone over an area with this nuclear option, watched the weeds wither and die, only to notice them coming back a few days or weeks later. Did some survive the onslaught? Did new seeds blow in? It really doesn't matter, because the weeds won. They always do.

Well, the Church is like that in a lot of ways: not always pretty, but tough and resilient, popping up again and again in places where it was supposed to be dead or dying, reseeding itself in places where it was supposed to be stamped out, growing in places you would swear couldn't support life. You can pull it up, root it out, spray it with Roundup and pave over it, but it will always come back. The gates of Hell haven't got a chance. (Matthew 16:18)

I first met Avon Murray when I went to the first church I served as a pastor. Avon was about 90 at the time and had attended an agricultural college for a couple of years after graduating from high school, which was an unusual thing for farm boys from Missouri in the early part of the 20th century. He told me that on the first day of class he learned the definition a weed: a weed, he was told, is "a plant out of place." Every gardener, every farmer, can testify to the appropriateness of that definition. If you plant corn and it comes up, that's good. If you plant soybeans and corn sprouts up because some seed stayed in the ground over the winter, that's bad. That corn just became a weed, like the volunteer tomatoes in my pea patch.

Sometimes the Church, too, is "out of place," not accidentally, but by design. When we challenge conventional wisdom, when we speak out against injustice, when we witness to the good news of Jesus in a world of fear and unbelief, we are often told to get back in our proper place. And it's tempting to do just that. That's when we need to remember that we don't get to pick the place where we are supposed to grow. That's up to God. We may find ourselves planted, as the Church so often has over the millennia, in a pretty inhospitable place. If so, that may well be where we need to be. Remember that plants produce fruit, but they also, over time, break down rocks. And that may be what we're called to do, too.

