September 18th, 2009

St. Matthew’s Episcopal and St. Anthony Park Lutheran

The following is from Luther Seminary’s Blog as written by Tim Snyder:

Context matters to me deeply. Besides being the entire reason I began this seminary journey, it has also been the very thing that sustained me in my first year at Luther Seminary as I served The Netzer Co-Op in Austin, Texas and studied towards an M.Div. in the distributed learning program. One of my primary questions during the transition to residential study was how do I stay grounded in a context? Seminaries are strange places, let's be honest. They are not normal spaces. Matter of fact Luther Seminary is formative precisely because it is not a normal space -- it is a liminal space in which a provision community forms made up of more pastors than we ever know what to do with, a level of education that is frightening and a degree of homogeny that we'll leave alone for another day. Its a crucible this place called seminary. It's not normal and it is not supposed to be. But what about context? What about the places we all come from? What about the very neighborhood that surrounds 2481 Como Avenue? How do we stay connected to that?

What if we walked the neighborhoods?
What if we prayed for them as we did just that?
What if we listened deeply to the voices of pastors who served in the neighborhoods of our city?
What if we took the time to quite our spirits down and be present to the living God is has gone before us to shape the world we will soon be sent into?

This past Friday, a group of students, faculty and pastors did just that. This is important stuff and the kind of thing that is driving the theological imagination of this weird, liminal space we call
Luther Seminary. If you have ever asked yourself these questions or if you are now, you should come next time.

posted by Tim K. Snyder at 2:59 PM

Our Journey Begins . . .

We started out on Luther Seminary’s Campus and Pastor Marc Ostlie-Olson from St. Anthony Park Lutheran began by explaining the relationship between Luther Seminary and his congregation. At one point, St. Anthony Park Lutheran was the congregation for Luther Seminary. Also, at one point, the area was used for grazing livestock and fences had to be built in order to chorale animals into desirable areas! St. Anthony Park has a great number of families with children. Due to the presence of the University of Minnesota and Luther Seminary, there are also many PhDs, international students and college/graduate students in the area. There are some families with multiple generations who live in the area, and there is a “small town” feel to the community.
Gathering at Luther . . .

Pastor Marc Ostlie-Olson talking with the group about St. Anthony Park, Luther Seminary and the connections to St. Anthony Park Lutheran.
Next, we went to St. Anthony Park Lutheran and learned about the congregation. The congregation has a large number of highly educated individuals including many of Luther’s own past and present faculty. This leads to many exciting and valuable educational opportunities for all ages. They have an extensive music program for neighborhood youth and Wednesday night dinners for the community. There are many international members that are present in this congregation, and a Chinese congregation also utilizes the space. When asked to name one of the challenges the congregation faces, Pastor Marc Ostlie-Olson stated that the congregation had been very blessed and was looking for good ways to share what they had been given.
At St. Antony Park Lutheran.

Pastor Ostlie-Olson speaking about St. Anthony Park Lutheran.
At St. Matthew’s Episcopal

We divided into groups and prayed and walked over to St. Matthew’s Episcopal. There, Dr. Dwight Zscheile spoke to us about the ministry he and his wife, Rev. Pogue experience in the congregation. Similar to St. Anthony Park Lutheran, this congregation also has many highly educated individuals in its midst. Likewise, many international students shape the congregation by bringing their practices and traditions to share. The congregation has an art gallery which showcases works of both adults and youth alike. The congregation has been highly involved in social justice efforts such as assisting with Loaves and Fishes and offering their congregation space for “Project Home” (congregations in this effort provide their space as an overflow shelter). They, furthermore, have monthly Taize services. When asked about a struggle the congregation experiences, Dr. Zscheile stated that the congregation has been trying to explore ways to both be engaged in service and reflective of their Christian identity.

Dr. Zscheile speaking about St. Matthew’s Episcopal.
Afterwards, we prayed and walked over to Mim’s and ate some good Mediterranean and Middle Eastern food.
The group heading to Mim’s!