

## Gather, Transform, and Send: It's What Churches Do!

If you have ever attended the Diocesan program, *College for Congregational Development*, then you know the oft-repeated anthem – *There's a model for that!* – as they seek to help congregations become more faithful, healthy, and effective communities of faith.

One of my favorite models is called *Gather-Transform-Send*. The model is described in this way:

*The unique purpose and work of a congregation is to gather those called by God into Christ's body, the Church – a community of transformation of mind, heart, and action – and to send these same people into the world both to be and to act as God's loving and transforming presence."*

I like this model because it can help us examine our life together. When things feel stagnant or stuck, this model can be used as a process to revitalize and re-examine who we are, what gifts we possess, and how those gifts might intersect with the needs of the community that is changing around us.

Often, churches get caught up in thinking that "growth" is more about strategies of getting more people in the doors, or to increase pledges, or to try "being all things to all people." While attracting more people, and increasing giving, and offering a variety of ways for people to participate in the church are important, they alone do not necessarily lead to growing a vibrant, healthy, or effective community of faith.

Content experts and literature devoted to church growth and revitalization have observed that congregations who develop and articulate their core identity have the greatest potential to deepen who they are, which in turn, appeals to newcomers most suited to that congregation. When you know who you are as a congregation, you can articulate that in compelling and succinct ways in your surrounding culture and community. This is the way people can come to know you, find you, and join in the worship, mission, and ministry your congregation is offering.

Our primary reason for being a church is to renew people in their baptismal identity – through worship, education, fellowship, and service and then to be sent out into the world to love and serve God in a variety of ways through our day-to-day lives.

*Gather-Transform-Send* is one model that we can use to discover, articulate, and refine how we at Holy Family are unique in our worship of God, and in how we serve, and in how we invite people more deeply into their baptismal ministry.

I like to think that Holy Family is such a place where people are gathered-transformed-and sent. We have a strong history and culture of gathering. This happens not only on Sunday mornings, but in other ways and through various ministries.

As we prepare for the upcoming program year, my hope is to take opportunities to share this model, and others, with various leaders and ministries. I believe using these models as a launching-off point, can lead us into deeper conversations about who we are and who we believe God is calling us, as a parish, to be.

I am excited and proud of Holy Family and am looking forward to seeing where God will lead us next!

- Father Frank