

LENTEN DINNER CIRCLE: ROOM AT MY TABLE
The Spiritual Practice of Hospitality

*And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him,
and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons. Mark 3:14-15*

One of the first things Jesus did when beginning his ministry was to form a group of friends that he traveled with, ate with, and ministered to and alongside. He chose twelve disciples, or more, since there are rumors there were, in fact, women disciples.

As Lent approaches, I have heard about two spiritual practices that are highly valued at First Presbyterian Church of Annapolis, Lenten Circles and Dinners for Eight. Consider those disciplines in relation to two themes that surfaced during FPCA's assessment process:

- **Folks value a sense of community** and want to feel more connected to each other, especially people they don't know very well in the congregation.
- **There is a desire to shift the demographics** of the church to create more age and stage of life balance.

The number one way to increase the size of a church is for members to invite their friends. Hence, here is a proposal for a Lenten practice that combines the two highly valued activities with two of the identified assessment desires: **Lenten Circles + Dinners for Eight = Lenten Dinner Circles.**

- **CONCEPT:** Four people gather, decide on a theme/study/discussion topic for four weeks in Lent. The four then invite four more folks (for a total of eight) to join them in their Lenten activity.
- **WHO:** These could be folks from the congregation you would like to get to know better or they could be folks you would like to 'gently' introduce to FPCA.
- **WHEN / WHERE:** The group decides the day/time/location. The group could alternate hosting or pick a central spot for meeting once a week, or at least four times during Lent.
- **TOPICS:** Book studies, religious movies, documentary film series, a prayer study group, a spiritual writing group, etc. Rev. Shortlidge and I will be preaching a series from the book *Gifts of the Dark Wood: Seven Blessings for Soulful Skeptics (and Other Wanderers)* by Eric Elnes. A study on that book would deepen the Sunday sermon experience.
- **QUESTIONS?** Stop by and see me or Heather, or drop either of us an email (Lisa@annapolis-presbyterian.com, Heather@annapolis-presbyterian.com).

"God began to teach me that there is a huge difference between "entertaining" and offering hospitality. Entertaining puts the emphasis on you and how you can impress others. Offering hospitality puts the emphasis on others and strives to meet their physical and spiritual needs so that they feel refreshed, not impressed, when they leave your home." - Ehman, Karen. A Life That Says Welcome: Simple Ways to Open Your Heart & Home to Others (p. 18). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

HOW TO SIGN-UP - Spiritual Formation elder, Cecilia Richardson, is assisting in coordination of the dinner groups. To sign up, provide the information below to Cecilia (cfnegri@hotmail.com) by email, offering plate, or in her session mailbox (red box, located across from the church office). Sign ups are **REQUESTED BY FEBRUARY 24** for coordination by Lent, which begins March 6.

Name(s) _____ I/we are interested in finding out what groups are available.

Phone # _____ Email(s) _____