

An Invitation to a Conversation

Dear friends in Christ,

I am excited to introduce you to **Sh/ft: From Maintenance to Mission**, a new conference-wide initiative designed to support your congregation in exploring fresh paradigms for ministry in the 21st Century.



Most of us assume the Christian Faith will still be around in 50 years; we just don't know what the ministry or the Church of Jesus Christ will look like! One thing is for sure – it will change. While many of us are focused on the decline of our congregations, we are also curiously aware of the rise of spirituality in our communities. This seems like a crazy contradiction, but in reality it is an exciting phenomenon. It may feel counter-intuitive, but God is calling the Church to a vision and a ministry beyond our buildings and budgets. God is calling us to the places where our Christian faith and the needs of the world intersect. At these crossroads, lives will be transformed as people from all walks of life work together for a more just and generous world.

The central idea around “Sh/ft” is that **ministry will increasingly involve connecting, supporting and collaborating**. Imagine how many ideas we have not yet shared! Consider all the ways we could network and resource one another. Today as never before, the Spirit urges us to take thoughtful risks for the sake of bringing grace and goodness to this fragile and fearful world. This same Spirit calls all us to a Shift – from maintenance to mission – from the institutional patterns of the past to the entrepreneurial possibilities of the future.

Such a bold calling is daunting. That's why we want to invite your congregation into a conversation that will ultimately identify a particular dimension of your ministry in which you might consider making a strategic change. We are developing some areas of focus essential for 21st Century ministry: Spiritual Formation, Justice Ministries, Leadership Development, Alternative Ministry Models, and Community Engagement.

We envision this initiative as a partnership between the Wider Church and your congregation. Our Conference Board of Directors and staff are prioritizing this initiative and preparing to equip, coach and resource your congregation in a myriad of ways over the coming months and years. Additionally, our Annual Meeting in June will focus on the Shift Initiative with special guests Cameron Trimble, from the Center for Progressive Renewal, and Mark Tidsworth, from Pinnacle Leadership Associates.

What's most important, however, is that your congregation remains true to God's unique vision and calling for your ministry. Thus, **we invite your pastor and leadership team to engage in a conversation over the next few months**. Tisha Brown and I have put together four brief videos for the purpose of guiding you through this conversation. We pray God's Spirit will open hearts and minds to some exciting new possibilities in your local ministry.

We anticipate each of the four videos and the ensuing discussions will take about 30 minutes (for a total of 2 hours). We encourage you to engage in this dialogue however it seems most fitting for your leadership team. Our hope is that congregations will complete these conversations by May in preparation for the annual meeting in June. Some congregations will tackle these conversations at regular meetings (once a month between February and May); others may undertake the whole process in a retreat setting or at a special meeting. Of course you are welcome to expand the invitation wider in your congregation if that appeals to you.

The conversation develops along these four themes: appreciating our beloved faith communities, discovering the unexpected blessings of change, identifying spiritual practices beyond the Church, and exploring possibilities for a shift in your ministry. Let us know you're participating.

Follow the links on the Shift page to find the Shift resources.

We hope this conversation will be meaningful and fruitful for your future ministry! If you have any questions about this process, please feel free to contact [Tisha Brown](#) or [me](#).

In gratitude and hope for your ministry,

Franz Rigert