

Congregations thrive when they focus on doing more

January is the month many congregations have their annual meetings, including passing the new budget. So, it's this time of year that the refrain "we have to cut the budget" is often heard. However, in this context it might be more accurate if the refrain were "let's do less ministry next year" or "we need to be less generous next year" or even "we need to respond to God's love less next year."

In addition to what this says about our faith and commitment, it is also a death toll for the congregation. New people in the community don't want to join a congregation that is being less of a blessing next year. Members of congregations don't become more engaged when the congregation announces it will be doing less ministry next year. People do not want to increase their giving

to a congregation that is being less generous next year — and probably the year after and the year after that.

Pastor Tom Berlin, writing for the Lewis Center for Church Leadership (October 2016), suggests that "when a church blesses the poor and vulnerable, then people are excited to join that mission." Berlin suggests that people want to belong to a congregation that is making a difference in the world. He further writes that a generous church people want to participate because it is exciting and important. They don't want to miss worship, because they might miss a chance to experience grace; they want to give, or some child may go hungry; they want to volunteer, or someone may not learn about God's love.

By contrast, when a congregation is focused on doing less, being less, serving less, and shrinking its mission down to just providing services to the existing members, it is a place of decay, not joy. In other words, generous congregations thrive and congregations with a declining mission decline.

— *Pastor Mark Anderson*
Assistant to the Bishop



Men are invited to the 'One Year to Live' retreat

Feb. 10-12, 2017
Camp Ewalu, Strawberry Point, Iowa

Men of all ages are encouraged to register by Jan. 25 for the "One Year to Live" men's retreat set for Feb. 10-12 at Ewalu Camp & Retreat Center, Strawberry Point.

The OYTL retreat offers an opportunity for men to rethink how they set their priorities and discover how God has equipped them to live. It is presented by Lutheran Men in Mission, in partnership with the Northeastern Iowa Synod and Camp Ewalu.

The retreat focuses on small group discussions and activities led by lay men who have attended previous OYTL retreats and rediscovered their own faith in Christ. Men who attend the 45-hour OYTL retreats leave with a new mission statement for life and a plan centered on how

they would live their lives if they knew they had only one year to live.



This weekend retreat starts at 5:30 p.m. on Friday and ends at 3 p.m. Sunday. Those who register by Wednesday, Jan. 25, receive the discounted rate of \$185. Standard registration is due by Feb. 3 for \$225.

To learn more and to download the brochure/registration form, visit www.neiasynod.org/ministries/mens-ministry.

