

June 27, 2017

My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

2 Corinthians 12:9

Dear Mennonite Church Saskatchewan,

In recent days, Marianne, Kirsten and I have been going through boxes as we prepare to move our office to the MCC Building. This has been a good “get to know MC Sask” experience. As we sort the files into the archives pile, shredder pile, and the “must keep close by” pile, I have become more aware of the painful experiences we have gone through as an area church. When Betty Pries was with us at the first mini-retreat, she drew a picture of the “MC Sask” river on the board. What began as clusters of streams (congregations) eventually merged into a large river (CoMoS). As time moved on, however, there were splits in the river and streams broke off, indicating times when congregations left our fellowship.

I recall the conversation around this activity being somewhat muted. It felt like folks were not quite ready to dive in. In recognizing this brokenness, the reference group felt it was important to ask the question; “Lord, what are You calling us to let go of?” as well as include the statement, “Lord, open us to Your healing.”

I’ve sometimes wonder if we should play the same Public Service Announcement in our churches that gets played in airports; “Please do not leave baggage unattended. Unattended baggage will be removed immediately by security.” While my point is not to be glib about the depth of our pain, leaving our wounds unattended has ongoing consequences in our own lives and in our life together as an area church. But more importantly, when we don’t attend our woundedness, we don’t allow our wounds to transform and change us; we miss the blessing they have to give us.

In his book, *The Wounded Healer*, Henri Nouwen writes, “Nobody escapes being wounded. We all are wounded people, whether physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. The main question is not ‘How can we hide our wounds?’ so we don’t have to be embarrassed, but ‘How can we put our woundedness in the service of others?’ When our wounds cease to be a source of shame, and become a source of healing, we have become wounded healers. Jesus is God’s wounded healer: through his wounds we are healed. Jesus’ suffering and death brought joy and life. His humiliation brought glory; his rejection brought a community of love. As followers of Jesus we can also allow our wounds to bring healing to others.”

As Mennonites, we struggle to name our woundedness. We don’t necessarily have the language to talk about it. Yet, the very thing we struggle to name has the potential to give the new life we yearn to receive.

Yours in Christ,

Ryan Siemens