

1 It probably won't surprise to hear that young people outside of the Christian tradition typically see the church and the Christians who make up the church as judgmental, hypocritical, boring and, increasingly, irrelevant. Part of the problem is that the church is indeed made up of sinners like us who do sometimes lapse into judgment and hypocrisy, and in our desire to hold on tightly to our traditions, we've often failed to contextualize our worship and message to a world that continues to change around us, even if we haven't. It's only natural for us to want to invest in what we love about who we are as a church: Our worship, the warm welcome we get at the front door, the various ministries that care for our congregation and community. But even as we pour our lives into making this a better church, the world around us continues to drive by, mostly not even bothering to pronounce judgment on us.

That's a problem for us, because Jesus made it rather clear that we, His body, are to be about the business of baptizing and teaching new disciples. Will some people still walk into a church building to check it out on a Sunday morning? Sure, especially United Methodists who've moved and are looking for a new church home. But what about the 99.9% remainder of the neighbors all around us? Most people who aren't attending a church today aren't likely to get up on their own one day and decide that worshipping in a church has got to be better than sleeping in on Sunday morning.

What if I told you there was a way for us to be more faithful and effective in reaching new disciples by doing things we mostly already know how to do, and that by doing more of these things, we can actually change the way we think about who we are as a church and what we're supposed to be doing? What if this Lent, instead of giving up chocolate or Netflix, we add some spiritually healthy habits? Here's the way author Michael Frost describes this journey of adopting new missional habits.

{Watch STW- Introduction, 4:53}

2 For this season of Lent, if you want to give something up, that's OK. But I'd like you to add something. Specifically, I'm inviting each of you to join me in developing some new habits that will propel us outward into ministry in the world. We'll be reading Michael Frost's book together and taking the BELLS challenge: Bless, Eat, Listen, Learn, and Sent.

Bless three people each week; Eat with three people each week; Listen to the Holy Spirit each week; Learn about Jesus each week; and understand ourselves as being Sent by Jesus. Each week on Wednesday nights we'll watch a short video teaching in worship after dinner and then dismiss into small conversation groups. You can participate without having read the book, but they're very easy to read and I encourage you to pick one up tonight in the lobby for five bucks. (If you can't afford five dollars, then please take one as a gift). If you can't make our Wednesday night sessions, we'll also be offering small groups at other times and places.

3 Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ. Tonight we enter into a time of spiritual preparation, reminding ourselves of the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the need we all have to renew and share our faith. I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, and the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, to observe a holy Lent: by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word. I especially invite you to join us on Wednesday nights in Lent as we break bread together, worship together, and join in small groups and seek to learn the five holy habits of Blessing, Eating, Listening, Learning, and seeing ourselves as Sent.



Buffalo United Methodist Church

...serving people for Jesus Christ so that we all may know joy!

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