

## Shmita: A Year of Learning, Reflection and Regeneration

Dear Minnesota Annual Conference Clergy:

You may remember receiving a notice once every five years to attend a Boundary and Ethics training. We hit a pause on that to ask what we can do to make it a richer and deeper process. At the same time, the 2016 Book of Discipline created a new process whereby every clergy undergoes a comprehensive assessment process every 8 years. We decided to combine those two requirements to make it something that will be an investment in you: attending to sustaining pastoral excellence. In the Hebrew tradition there is the concept of the sabbatical year. It is called Shmita (or Shemitah) which means release and is known as the jubilee year where land is left fallow, debts are released and the perennial harvest redistributed and accessible for all.

The work of ministry is demanding, and we are not the same people we were seven years ago. We have been in the design process of creating a seventh year experience that would be an intentional year of learning, reflection and regeneration that would be an in-depth look at our health and well-being as well as discerning our excellence in ministry and how and where is God calling us our next seven years. What do we need to claim and hold on to? What do we need to let go of? And what needs to be realigned and shifted?

***You are being invited to a part of our launch year of Shmita.*** Every clergy will be invited into this process once every seven years, and we are starting this first year with clergy who have been in their appointment seven years or more.

The apex of the *Shmita* year is a ***Total Well-Being retreat to be held January 22-24<sup>th</sup>*** and led by Mark Sundby of LeaderWise. There is preparation before the retreat as well as discernment and implementation after the retreat with the goal to be a renewed personalized plan for your life and ministry for the next season of your life, as well as cultivating practices of resilience so that you can lead out of a place of health and strength.

The *Shmita* process includes:

- Complete an EQ360 inventory in preparation for the Total Well Being retreat. This survey on emotional intelligence for leadership will give you a benchmark of your strength and growth areas with helpful insights from persons you select to give you feedback.
- Journal on reflection questions about your calling and ministry over the past seven years before you attend the Total Well-Being retreat.
- Attend the Total Well-Being Retreat, and be fully present and engaged in the process. This retreat is built on the principles from Gallup regarding well-being in life.
- Complete a personalized learning and development plan for your life and ministry as an outcome of the Total Well-Being retreat.
- Read the books *Saying Yes to Say No: Everyday Boundaries and Pastoral Excellence* by David C. Olsen and Nancy G. Devor and *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving* by Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman and Donald C Guthrie. You are asked to meet with 2

or 3 other clergy in their *Shmita* year and read the books together and work through the reflection questions.

- Meet with your District Superintendent regarding your insights and next steps for your life and ministry after the retreat.
- Pursue your plan of development whether that be seeking out a new peer learning experience, spiritual direction, coaching or other plans for attending to your well-being and growing in pastoral excellence.
- Attend the Jubilee Party on Tuesday, September 25th at the end of your *Shimta* year to share your learnings and celebrate with your colleagues.

**The Total Well-Being retreat will be from 10:30am on Monday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> to 2:30pm on Wednesday, January 24th at Lake Koronis. We have a limit of 35 people we can accommodate for this event, and therefore, and you need to register by December 15th in order to have ample time to complete your EQ 360 inventory before the retreat.** The components of the Total Well Being retreat include:

- An individualized interpretation from a “360 degree” assessment of your emotional, mental and leadership health.
- Spiritual practices and stress-management skills in mindfulness meditation, centering prayer, yoga, fitness, communication and resilience.
- Identification of your core strengths and creative, constructive ways to leverage them for sustained well-being in your many roles as clergy.
- An opportunity to strengthen relationships with fellow clergy.
- Develop a personalized well-being plan for you to practice at home with follow up resources.
- Opportunities for one-on-one conversations with the staff of LeaderWise concerning your personal and professional well-being.

**This *Shimta* year is mandatory, in that you need to participate in it once every seven years. It meets the requirement of boundary and ethics training, as well as the newly required 8 year assessment required by the Book of Discipline (Paragraph 349.3). If for some reason, you cannot make these dates work this year, or the retreat is filled before you had the chance to register, you can postpone to next year but you need to complete the *Shmita* year within 2 years of your invitation.** While it is mandatory, we are seeking to design it so that it is an investment in you, in order to sustain you in ministry and continues to undergird your growth and development in excellence in ministry. Our hope is that when you come to the Jubilee party, you are thankful for this experience and it has had an impact in your life and ministry!

**To register:**

Cost: \$350. If you need a letter written to your Staff Parish Relations committee for additional continuing education funds, please let your District Superintendent know. Your District Superintendent would be happy to help your SPRC understand the time demands of this *Shmita* year as well.

Optional: If you would like an individual session to debrief your EQ 360 with a staff person at LeaderWise, you may arrange for that. There will be an additional cost of \$325 for the session, and \$165 if you would like a written summary of that session.