

Ministry of all the Baptized

Marks of Baptismal Communities

Christians, followers of Jesus, continually seek to order their life in the way Jesus showed us, calling on the Spirit for guidance and strength. In communities of disciples, people gather together regularly to worship and support each other in this way of life. The Episcopal Church in Iowa is a collection of worshiping communities of faith who support each other in their work of growing disciples who follow this Christian way of life.

Taking into account the growing diversity that already exists across The Episcopal Church in Iowa, a task group self-named Ministry of all the Baptized (MOAB) was created several years ago. The purpose of this task group is to support the ministry of all the baptized in the Episcopal faith communities in Iowa. It became apparent that in order to direct the work of MOAB the task group needed some indicators with which to measure the development of ministry in faith communities.

The following, “Marks of Baptismal Communities,” will be used by MOAB as a focus in its work across the diocese. MOAB will be using these marks as a way to assess its work with congregations and as a way of talking about vision and direction in the diocese. We offer them to others to be used as the Spirit suggests. Perhaps it will begin conversations within faith communities about their life together. Perhaps it will open possibilities within faith communities for deepening awareness of God’s work. There are certainly many ways these marks can add depth to our lives. MOAB welcomes ideas, thoughts, and comments about their use in order to keep this document meaningful and alive for all.

People understand their authority and gifts for ministry come from the Holy Spirit and are expected to be used daily

- There is ongoing discernment and reflection on the ministry of individuals and the congregation.
- People support each other in growing and using their gifts
- People are encouraged to share their gifts with each other and the wider community

Responsibility for life in community is shared by all in the community

- People participate in the life of the community
- Leadership is shared in all aspects of community life
- People know their gifts are valued
- People take responsibility for effective communication
- People are encouraged and supported in order to follow through on their work in community
- The health of the community is the responsibility of all

Decision making is flexible and adaptable

- Transparency exists; people know what issues are being raised and what decisions need to be made
- Decision making practices include all community members when appropriate
- A variety of decision making practices are used and people understand why different practices are helpful

A commitment to growing as a learning community is practiced

- A wide variety of formation and educational opportunities are offered
- A variety of prayers, music, and worship experiences are practiced
- People know they can bring their questions about their spiritual journey to others in the community and have the opportunity for some reflection and conversation
- People work to increase their emotional intelligence

Hope is apparent throughout the community

- People feel a sense of belonging and energy
- Ideas are expressed and explored
- The community focuses more on possibilities than on what is missing or lost

Creative tension exists between inward and outward vision

- There is a balance of ministries where members are gathered together and where members are scattered in the community in ministry
- The focus inward supports the individual and community growth in order to go out into the world
- The focus outward offers reflection on the inward strengths, gifts and skills required to meet the needs in the world
- How money is spent matches the inward and outward vision
- The community seeks to develop authentic relationships with its neighborhood and partnerships with other faith communities

Chaordic energy is apparent

- Conflicts are managed well and people interact with each other in respectful and appropriate ways
- Feelings and ideas are expressed directly and openly and are listened to in the community
- Groups are willing to take risks
- The community actively seeks and values diversity

1.12.17

Ongoing list of ways to use the Marks of Baptismal Communities

Vestries can use them in their planning for congregations

Clergy new to the diocese

Seminarians

Transition work

Mutual Ministry Reviews in congregations

Use with congregations who are thinking about forming a ministry development team

Leadership development tools – engage with congregation about their development of leaders

