



INTEGRATING LEADING EDGE THEOLOGIES AND MINISTRY MOMENTS

A Theology Colloquium sponsored by the Edmonton Presbytery of the United Church of Canada

Purpose

The purpose of *The EDGE* is to integrate leading edge theological thought with the practice of pastoral ministry. It is an invitation to engage such thought to see what might be offered in our practical ministry with people experiencing moments of crisis or transition. The Colloquium will produce a paper or project on leading edge thought as it relates to practical ministry. We also hope this event will offer soil and sunshine for growing a sense of deeper connection among participants.

We believe that moments of crisis or transition in life can call us to explore the question of meaning, either implicitly or explicitly. Such moments may be related to suffering and death, profound transition, or angst of the soul, among others. We believe, in part, that ministry is about walking with people as they seek to make sense of these moments.

The expression, "leading edge theological thought," is intentionally broad and non-specific. We thought of using expressions such as "the emerging paradigm" or "contemporary theology", but these seem too limiting. We are not talking about any single, systematic body of theological thought, nor even that of any particular era. We intend only to refer to any theological thought that offers the promise of new and transforming insights into the practice of ministry.

Format

The primary audience is United Church ministry personnel in the Edmonton area, although it will be open to anyone who wishes to attend. The format will be a series of four gatherings as follows:

1. Wednesday, January 23, 2008
2. Wednesday, February 27, 2008
3. Wednesday, April 9, 2008
4. Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Each day will follow this schedule:

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| 9:00 | Gathering |
| 9:30 | Worship |
| 10:00 | Reconnecting |
| 11:00 | Presentation |
| 12:00 | Lunch (<i>provided</i>) |
| 1:00 | Engaging the presentation through dialogue |
| 2:30 | Closing |
| 3:00 | Completion of the Day |

Method

1. to begin with a particular "moment" (experience, task or challenge) of practical ministry,
2. to identify some theological questions or challenges that are raised for us by that particular "moment,"
3. to identify insights from the leading edges of theological thought which might help us to respond to those theological questions or challenges, and finally,
4. to explore how those insights might make a difference in our approach to similar "ministry moments" in the future.

Sessions

The first three of the four sessions will be focussed on one particular “ministry moment” and follow the method explained above. The fourth session will be an integrative session based on a review of the first three sessions in order to identify common patterns of insight.

Each of the sessions will be introduced by the presentation of a paper which models the method (see above) applied to the focus for that session (see below). The presentation will be about 60 minutes in length. Following the presentation, the participants will discuss the presentation in relation to their own experience of ministry and theological questions and insights. The final papers need to be available in written form by the end of December, 2007, with permission for distribution and publication by the colloquium planning team.

We believe that, for the colloquium to work as intended, it is important that each session be grounded in a particular practical moment of crisis or transition, and explore possible theological responses using inductive processes.

Each of the sessions will have a different focus, as follows:

Session 1: Practical Theology

presented by Rod Sykes

How do we minister faithfully in an age of fear and perceived scarcity? What does salvation mean in the 21st Century? What does salvation have to do with practical ministry? Can God’s abundance save us?

Session 2: Preaching and Worship

presented by Catherine MacLean

What do leading edge theologies have to say to the community about preparing worship with integrity, preparing pastoral prayers in a Sunday morning worship service, or the sermons we publicly share in worship gatherings? How do we discern the pastoral and worship needs of our congregations?

Session 3: Moral and Ethical Questions in Pastoral Care

presented by Fran Hare

In responding to crisis moments like suffering and death, what do leading edge theologies offer us? What are the moral and ethical questions around suicide, assisted suicide and euthanasia, the extension of treatment to prolong life. How do we accompany people toward death? Is there sacredness in death?

Session 4: Summary & Common Insights

presented by Earle Sharam and the Planning Team

What insights have we gained through the first three sessions? How can we integrate those insights, patterns or common elements to inform and shape our pastoral ministry? What changes are we inspired to make?

The four papers and a synopsis of the discussions will subsequently be made available to a broader audience as the product of the Colloquium.

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