

September 18, 2020

Dismantling the Silos

As many of you know, I grew up on a farm, and we had a variety of grain storage buildings, including silos. Silos are necessary on the farm to protect crops from the weather and cross-contamination. Silos also have great acoustics! In church work, and here at Plymouth, we have used the language of ministry silos. With large churches there is a natural pull toward ministry silos because of the amount of work. It makes sense to have ministers with a certain expertise manage an area of ministry. The tall, thick walls of a silo are good for the farm but not so much for the church, even a large church.

Yes, of course it is important and necessary to have experienced clergy with responsibility over certain functions of ministry. Specialized ministry can provide effective division of labor. But it can also foster territorialism, competition, conflict and duplication of services.

Dismantling the silos and working as a team requires collaboration and more interaction between outreach, education, pastoral care and all our programs. This model encourages planning joint events and programs including music, theater and the arts.

Dismantling the silos also reinforces big-picture thinking by clarifying our shared purposes and mission and how each ministry, board and staff person is integral to success. For the last three years, we have been dismantling our silos. Beth, Seth and I each have responsibility for certain areas of ministry within the church, and we have shared much of the rest of the demands of ministry. It has worked well. Pending the vote on September 27, this is the ministry model that Rev. Dr. Dewayne Davis will be joining in late December, and he is excited about it! He will lead the team and the team will lead the church.

Blessings!

Paula