



Formation

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How is a community born?

Recently while returning from a trip to British Columbia, my flight made a scheduled stopover in Calgary. We waited in our seats while some passengers deplaned and others boarded for the flight to Winnipeg. As we headed back toward the runway we suddenly stopped, turned around and returned to the gate. One of the passengers was experiencing a medical emergency. Several Emergency Medical Technicians boarded the plane and tended to the ill passenger.

It soon became obvious that this was going to take awhile. My seatmate and I glanced at each other a few times. After a bit, one of us ventured a cautious comment about the delay this was causing. The other expressed concern for the sick person. Then, as the clock ticked on, our conversation slowly began to grow.

It took about an hour before we finally got up in the air. In that time our discussion progressed from the safe “too bad about the sick person” and “I hope this doesn’t make me too late” comments, to sharing about our work, our families, the things we valued about life, and so on. We were not alone. I noticed numerous other people, who under normal flying conditions would have sat in isolated silence, engaged in similar warm conversations with their seatmates.

Upon later reflection, I realized that something profound had taken place on that aircraft. While our planeload of people sat on the runway, a little bit of community was born. We began with the simple fact that we shared the same space, the same circumstances. It wasn’t much – just the common experience of a slight disruption to our collective schedules. But this bit of sharing, brought about by uncontrollable circumstances, led us to discover that we, who at the outset were strangers to one another, really shared many things.

The path to community is most often found in this way. It emerges when strangers are drawn together through shared experience and become friends. It is born whenever barriers are removed and trust is extended. Community can be found whenever we reach out to the strangers in our midst and discover to our surprise and delight, that they bear the image of God.

I draw to your attention, two new study resources included in this packet:

1. ***Becoming Human: on theological anthropology in an age of engineering life*** is a pamphlet prepared by the Canadian Council of Churches to assist churches in responding to the challenges put before us by advances in science and technology. Additional copies are available free of charge through the Resource Centre.

2. ***Rooted in the centre*** is a resource designed to help congregations engage effectively with God’s mission in their context. It is offered in partnership with MC Manitoba. Additional copies may be purchased through the Resource Centre.

<http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre/Home>