



Thinking Outside the Box (While Loving the Box) **September 26, 2022**

I've been sharing with you some thoughts about Christian formation as a two-layered process. One layer involves learning in some sort of teaching setting—Sunday School, Bible study group, seminary classroom, private reading, public worship, etc. The second layer, service and witness. These are not necessarily chronological. Some act of service or witness may precede insights about it that come in a more formal setting.

In the last segment, I talked about how my eleven years in the seminary classroom and another decade teaching at the college level proved immeasurably formative for me spiritually. The only experience that compares in terms of impact was an eight-year adventure as a church planter.

The Right Rev. Peter J. Lee, bishop of Virginia, and The Right Rev. David Jones, suffragan bishop of Virginia, extended a call to me in 2002 to be the start-up priest for a new church in north metro Richmond, VA, in the Atlee area of Hanover County. First, I attended a church planters' boot camp to be schooled in the basics of church start up ministry. Then, March of that year found me in Hanover County beginning to assemble a launch team. Within a year or so, we had the requisite 50-60 adults needed in that model of church planting to consider beginning public worship.

We launched on All Saints Sunday in 2003 with one hundred seventeen in attendance. Worship took place at Cool Springs Elementary School and later at Hanover High School. Over that eight-year period, the worshipping community came to number around two hundred.

The Rev. Katie Rengers, missionary for new church development, asked me to create a podcast in 2020 for new mission developers (the in-vogue term now for a new minister planter/creator). She wanted to harvest my learnings for those newly engaged in this work. That challenge generated reflections on how planting a new church had changed and transformed my life and my vision of ministry.

With this piece as backdrop, next week, I'll try to share specifically how church planting transformed my life.

Peace,

David W. Perkins+
Interim Rector