The Community of God pt.9 -- Whose Job Is It?

1. Read Acts 6:1-7. A church asked me to help them find a minister. They had posted an ad describing the congregation and position on one of our college websites as well as in a monthly newspaper read throughout that tribe. I read their ad…

2. …and I couldn't stop reading and rereading it. Some of the ads posted were interesting, some were a bit sad, and a few scared me. They were supposed to be broken up into different role-types: pulpit, youth, family, outreach, counseling, worship…you get the idea. The ads were almost entirely for those at the beginning of their career or at the end of it (we have a house and you have Social Security!).

3. One of the ads was quite honest but it was also terrifying. I wrote it down so I'd not forget it. "Need a pulpit, youth, family, outreach, teaching minister." I was intrigued. Did they fire their entire staff or was this a church plant that needed a full team of ministers? I read on…

4. …"We are looking for someone to help us reach our community for Christ, preach two times each week, teach two classes a week, visit hospitals, shut-ins, and visitors. He needs to publish the bulletin and [I kid you not] be aware of any maintenance issues the building has and contract with the right people to take care of them."

5. I read on. It said that their average weekly attendance (and this was back in 2008, long before the current epidemic of closing congregations), was 70-85. I wondered what THOSE people were supposed to do. Seemed like they wanted to hire it done – by one person at half wages.

6. Let's be honest about a disease that humanity has – including us: we get a service or product and we enjoy it. We then feel that having this is a basic right, a part of being human. We are entitled to it. And if we don't have it, we feel cheated by other humans or the universe.

7. There is no question that those people who ran that ad loved each other and were willing to share with each other – even sacrifice for each other. But, when they saw a problem, and there will always be

problems, always be things that need to be done, they made the same error that church groups have made since the time of Jesus: they run to the leadership and tell them they want what they want.

8. This happens a lot in worship or in providing a service for a particular age group (the song list in Rochester). Sadly, some churches are governed by leaders that require that anything in the community has to come to them and be cleared by them. And many are just pipes echoing what the latest complainer said.

9. Do you see the contrast in Acts 6? The apostles said “you saw the need. Take some people from among yourselves and take care of it.”

10. Each of us have gifts. None of us have all of them but all of us have at least one of them. We were planned that way (Psalm 139). Some of those gifts were ours at birth while others were given to us due to our circumstances and history. (Jeremiah, David contrasted with Solomon)

11. Those who preach and teach are rarely also great at everything else, regardless of the expectations revealed by that ad. The greatest preachers and teachers can only do their work because others also used their gifts, whatever they may be.

12. Early on in the American Restoration Movement, aka the Stone Campbell Movement, there was a considerable minority that warned against hiring “located ministers” (as opposed to traveling ministers). They said that, if we hired local ministers, we would end up expecting them to do our Christian duty for us. And they had a point.

13. You cannot hire someone to work for you, sing for you, pray for you, or study for you. You can hire an expert in song, study, or teaching but it doesn’t release you from the obligation to use your gifts, actively, for the Lord.

14. But, wait! Aren’t we saved by grace? Absolutely. A hundred times yes. And praise God for that! But we were not saved so that we wouldn’t need to work. We were saved to be free to work without fear. Always remember the judgment scene in Matthew 25. Jesus, without

stuttering, told them it was who they were and what they did that gave them entrance into heaven.

15. This is not a guilt trip. Churches have done too much of that. Sadly, they also tend to teach a version of the Christian lifestyle that coasts along while others do the worship and work for them. Both extremes are a problem.

16. Jesus's first recorded words were "I must be about my father's business." Sounds like a good way to start every day. Don't worry if you've done no great thing for Jesus. Instead, do what you can with what you have for whomever is right in front of you. Be the temple of the Holy Spirit for that person.

17. Were you ever put into study or project groups in school and you groaned, knowing that most of the group was not going to contribute in any meaningful way? That often happens in churches. A church community, even ours, is made up of a huge amount of people with differing gifts and experiences. If the majority coast while the others do the work, things don't go as well as they should.

18. One of the joys of OSHC is that anyone and everyone can participate. Some make videos for us. Others join our prayer ministry. Others invite friends in, share the website and YouTube channel, and form house churches that I and other members get to visit. And the number of small charitable works done by the thousands of OSHC members is amazing.

19. Let's be an Acts 6 church. If you see something that is needed, or something that is good to do, assume the Spirit showed you that for a reason. Don't run it past the leadership or wait for a sign: do the good you see to do. In my life, I have seen hundreds of these ministries and I am impressed by every one. GHH, Cass Park, Little Dresses, Lifeline, Flint Global, Graceworks, OneGenAway...

20. All of these came from saved people saying they wanted to give back, show their love, honor their God, and solve a problem. There are a hundred ways to say it, but every member is a minister, priest, and a co-worker with me and every member of the OSHC team.

21. Read 1st Peter 2:9-12. We know you love Jesus. We know you are saved by the grace of Jesus. Now…find your verb. A walk through Hebrews 11 shows us that faith finds a verb.

22. No guilt trips here. No shaming, Just an open question: what is your verb?