

Seeing the Congregation Through a Systems Lens

Together in Mission
Greater Milwaukee Synod
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Systems Thinking

- we are all connected
 - the more important a group is to a person, the more influence it has on an individual
 - whatever affects one affects each one in the system.
 - anxiety spreads automatically
 - mutual influence
 - a symptom in a family member is a symptom of the larger system
 - families are multigenerational

Anxiety

- acute - in response to an immediate challenge/threat
- chronic - response to a potential challenge/threat

Emotional Process - Managing Discomfort, Anxiety, Threat, and Fear

- distance - cutoff
- conflict
- overfunctioning/underfunctioning
- projection onto another

Triangles

- two people get uncomfortable, one talks to a third person
- anxiety can get passed around
- relationships change - but often one doesn't know why
- interlocking triangles
- learn to observe triangles, and remain relatively calm and objective

Multigenerational Transmission

- problems get passed on from generation to generation

Differentiating a Self/Working on Maturity

- observe the system and one's part in it
- work on being calmer and managing one's reactivity
- work on one's own thinking
- stay connected to others - especially those who are challenging
- allow the other space to articulate his/her thinking
- be a self and let other be a self
- *degree of sensitivity to attention, approval, expectations and distress of self and others*
(Kerr, M.E. (2008). Why do siblings often turn out very differently? in A Fogel, B.J. King & S.G. shanker (Eds.). *Human development in the twenty-first century: Visionary ideas from systems scientists* (pp. 206-215). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

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