

Are We There Yet?

Tom De Vries

My wife, Laura, and I have three children: Trey, Ty, and Torri. Two boys and a girl, ages twenty-five, twenty-three, and twenty-two.

With all the most sincere love and appreciation for them as God's gift to us as parents, it is a joy that none of them live with us. Two live in California and one in Michigan.

The great transition of this year was Laura and I moving into a condo; we have hit a new life stage. We have downsized. We go for long walks together without wondering what the kitchen or family room will look like when we return. Our beautiful black labs, Zoe and Zuma, found a new home with acres to roam in the hill country of Texas.

Cutting grass, shoveling snow, pulling weeds, and laying down mulch are distant memories. When I head to Albany or Lawton, Oklahoma, or Pella, the trash goes in the dumpster, I turn the key on the front door, and I leave.

And yet, I find myself looking at the pictures in the guest room: our three kids with their boogie boards on the beach, and the vacation we took over a decade and a half ago—the fun, the laughter, and the memories—and I recognize what being in a new life stage means.

With life, we traverse through different realities.

On that vacation, heading to Ventura, California, just two and a half hours from where we lived, when we were only 10 percent of the way there—fifteen minutes down the road—the question came ringing out of the third row of the van: *Are we there yet?!*

Four words that devastate the family vacation—at least the journey to get there—out of the mouth of a five-year-old.

Whether they be from our kids or grandkids, even nieces or nephews, the repetition of four simple and ordinary words can destroy the joy of the journey.

We've all had the experience. It's like it's a phrase taught from McGuffey's Reader that every kindergartner learns. And then the shameful kindergarten teacher whispers to her students: *Try this out at home, on your next vacation trip.* And all the gullible five-year-olds dutifully respond appropriately out of their naturally inquisitive minds.

And about every fifteen minutes they repeat the question, since the previous time they were not given an affirmative enough response.

Are We There Yet?!

One of my fears coming into General Synod this year was that it would be a time of the 10 percent inquisition, fifteen minutes into the journey—or if you want to be literal, 6.67 percent. We are not very far on the journey.

And since as elders and pastors you are all adults, the creep of impatience has not yet set in. Thank you.

Last year, General Synod 2013 gave direction to us as a denomination in affirming Transformed and Transforming, setting us on a fifteen-year journey of which we have completed 6.67 percent.

Many decisions are being made; many changes are taking place. As I have gone throughout the church this year, I've reminded us that affirming Transformed and Transforming is a fifteen-year commitment to perpetual change.

Our highest judicatory initiated a transformational journey that is characterized by continuous and ongoing change. Either we are being changed or we are engaging in change in the name of Jesus Christ and for the sake of the world.

That is a scary thought. And so the journey begins. But what does that look like?

It starts with preparation.

PREPARATION

How will we prepare for the journey? It means starting with defining Transformed and Transforming. What is transformation? What do we mean when we talk about being transformed and being God's transforming agents in our world? How do we develop a common language that we use together to communicate how we are living together into this new vision?

Next we develop goals and objectives, starting with ends policies that our General Synod Council is in the middle of producing.

What does cultivating transformation in Christ tangibly look like?

What actions and commitments help us to effectively make followers of Jesus who live and love like him?

What hopes do we have in helping people deepen their spiritual journeys in ways that are biblical and reformed, and centered around loving and embracing all people?

Developing goals and objectives is followed by forming a structure that can support this vision and journey that we engage in. We ask:

- What initiatives do we create?
- What teams do we develop?
- What is the integration between classes, regional synods, and General Synod?
- How does the structure help us to achieve our goals and objectives?

Preparation is also about people—General Synod Council staff:

- What are the staff implications?
- What new responsibilities come from a new vision?
- How are churches and church leaders equipped to live into this new vision?
- How do staff positions for Our Call translate into Transformed and Transforming?

All of this is part of the continued discernment flowing out of last year's General Synod directive as we prepare for the journey we are engaging in.

And then we need to look at the budget—applying resources, reviewing costs and expenses, income and revenue—to see how we can achieve this vision together. We have to be willing to count the cost on the front end as we prepare for the journey.

Next is the leadership equation: Who forms the guiding coalition? Who helps in the development and implementation of the vision? Many ideas, visions, and strategic plans have failed for lack of implementation because there were not leaders who were committed to see the vision move to action and become reality.

And finally there's the prayer foundation. How do we engage in a foundation of prayer as we prepare to engage on this journey? The first steps for this were laid last September when we invited RCA congregations and leaders to enter into a time of prayer and reflection.

Three devotionals were distributed to be used in consistory meetings, classis gatherings, or regional synod meetings. Each devotional focused on one of the strategic priorities from *Transformed and Transforming*. The materials used to develop the devotionals came directly from the delegates to last year's General Synod. The words were the ones expressed in advisory groups as RCA leaders prayed and discerned together.

I found these prayers hope-filled—seeking God's leading as we begin to engage in this journey. I would like to invite you to pray one of these prayers responsively with me, asking for God's guidance, direction, and blessing—laying a foundation of prayer before us in preparing for the journey.

Lord, we thank you for letting us hear your voice through your people.

Lord Jesus, in your sovereignty graciously work through us to accomplish your mission in the world. May we become passionate disciples, filled with the power of your Spirit and the truth of your Word.

Holy Spirit, we ask that you transform us, both individually and corporately, in order that we might effectively work for the transformation of the world, until Jesus comes again.

Come soon, Lord Jesus! Amen.

It was the missionary and devotional writer Oswald Chambers who confirmed that prayer isn't preparation for the battle, prayer is the battle. He said:

Prayer does not equip us for greater works—prayer is the greater work. Yet we think of prayer as some commonsense exercise of our higher powers that simply prepares us for God's work. In the teachings of Jesus Christ, prayer is the working of the miracle of redemption in me, which produces the miracle of redemption in others, through the power of God.

That sounds a lot like transformation, like *Transformed and Transforming*.

We lay a foundation for prayer that isn't just to prepare us for the journey, but to be a part of our journey continuously.

Are we there yet?

It is a journey that begins with our first step—it begins with preparation: being ready for what we will encounter and what we will face as we work together for God’s transformation in our world.

Jesus stressed the importance of being prepared before starting in Luke 14:28-32, where he shared two examples of how we need to be ready before we engage. Here’s how that passage reads in *The Message*:

Is there anyone here who, planning to build a new house, doesn’t first sit down and figure the cost so you’ll know if you can complete it? If you only get the foundation laid and then run out of money, you’re going to look pretty foolish. Everyone passing by will poke fun at you: “He started something he couldn’t finish.”

Or can you imagine a king going into battle against another king without first deciding whether it is possible with his ten thousand troops to face the twenty thousand troops of the other? And if he decides he can’t, won’t he send an emissary and work out a truce?

We begin our journey with preparation. The second step in the journey is destination.

DESTINATION

Where is God calling us to go? How do we get clear on where God is leading us?

It would be so much easier if there was a pillar of cloud that we could follow by day and a pillar of fire that would lead us at night. For the last three years we have been walking by faith as we walk in discernment. We recognize that in some ways we have only a vague understanding of our destination, and that much of the revelation will come as we engage in the journey itself.

We know that it is a journey of transformation, of leadership, and of mission. It is hard to know if we are “there yet” if we don’t know where “there” is. And where “there” is may be much clearer for the Reformed Church in America together, than for individual congregations.

It may take longer for a local church to discern “there,” as they are later moving into the process or journey. But it offers us hope when we think of “there” as a place of transformation.

Our starting point may be 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) where it says—read this with me:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

And Romans 12:2 (NLT)—again, read this with me:

Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

We have a biblical understanding of transformation, of being changed because of our relationship to Jesus Christ. It carries into our creeds and confessions. In the Heidelberg

Catechism, Lord's Day 33, there is a series of questions and answers that expresses our creedal understanding of transformation. I'll read the question, you read the answer:

Q&A 88

Q. What is involved in genuine repentance or conversion?

A. Two things: the dying-away of the old self, and the rising-to-life of the new.

Q&A 89

Q. What is the dying-away of the old self?

A. To be genuinely sorry for sin and more and more to hate and run away from it.

Q&A 90

Q. What is the rising-to-life of the new self?

A. Wholehearted joy in God through Christ and a love and delight to live according to the will of God by doing every kind of good work.

We see from the catechism this natural tying together of transformation—living as new creations—and joyfully engaging out of our new selves in the expression of transformation—becoming people who are transforming, doing every kind of good work.

And then, Q&A 91:

Q&A 91

Q. What are good works?

A. Only those which are done out of true faith, conform to God's law, and are done for God's glory; and not those based on our own opinion or human tradition.

Wow! Gone are works done for the sake of tradition, or for our benefit, or out of our own bias and opinion. We are to engage in transforming action for the glory of God, acting in faith, in accordance with the law of God.

Conversion that leads to compassion. Change that leads to engaging as faithful followers of our Lord—living and loving like Jesus. Transformation that sends us into the world to serve others.

We become, as theologian Richard Niebuhr articulated, transformers of culture. We see business, government, education, the arts, family life all under the dominion of Jesus Christ. And we work to reclaim it for the glory of God. God is calling us forward on a journey of transformation.

We are also called to help in the formation of next-generation leaders: equipping emerging leaders of today and tomorrow.

All spiritual leadership is built on discipleship. You must first radically follow Christ before you can be a leader who leads other followers of Christ.

A spiritual leader exercises a God-given call and capacity as he or she seeks God's will with and for God's people and encourages and influences them to realize God's purposes.

It's about living into our calling and the capacity God has given us to be a leader. It isn't about our agenda; it's about God's agenda. It is laying aside our desires in order to submit and surrender to God's desires for us.

It is recognizing that we are the people of God, called out by God as the *ecclesia*—the church—to be the body of Christ actively at work in God's world. It is bringing encouragement and equipping, influence and inspiration to how we radically follow Christ in mission together.

It is realizing God's purposes: going to where God wants us to go, becoming what God wants us to be, and doing what God wants us to do, knowing that when we realize God's purposes for us God will be glorified.

It is a leadership journey—raising leaders for today—multi-generational leaders who live and love like Jesus and radically follow Christ in mission. And we especially focus on raising leaders for tomorrow—next-generation leaders who have a greater passion for God than we do—not just passing on our faith, but modeling a faith that boldly and courageously lives our convictions and commitments and influences the next generation.

This is a challenge. Today's generation, the millennials, are walking away from the faith, not being drawn toward it.

Surveys of millennials—those aged 18-34—tell us that 62 percent say they talk to God, while 52 percent say they look to religion for guidance. Millennials are widely believed to have less faith in God and are less active in religion than their parents and grandparents.¹

The famous “Nones’ on the Rise” study released by the Pew Research Center in October 2012 stated that if you are under thirty there's a one-in-three chance that religion plays little or no role in your life.

When we look at spirituality in the next generation, let alone raising spiritual leaders from the next generation, it will be a significant challenge.

Rachel Held Evans is a millennial. Last month she spoke at Hope College, and the month before at Calvin. She is an evangelical author and blogger. In a guest blog she wrote for CNN last July, she shares about why millennials are leaving the church and how we are to respond:

What millennials really want from the church is not a change in style but a change in substance.

We want an end to the culture wars. We want a truce between science and faith. We want to be known for what we stand for, not what we are against.

We want to ask questions that don't have predetermined answers.

We want churches that emphasize an allegiance to the kingdom of God over an allegiance to a single political party or a single nation...

We want to be challenged to live lives of holiness, not only when it comes to sex, but also when it comes to living simply, caring for the poor and oppressed, pursuing reconciliation, engaging in creation care and becoming peacemakers.

You can't hand us a latte and then go about business as usual and expect us to stick around. We're not leaving the church because we don't find the cool factor there; we're leaving the church because we don't find Jesus there.

Like every generation before ours and every generation after, deep down, we long for Jesus.ⁱⁱ

In this environment, what is the strategy moving forward? Rachel Held Evans concludes:

But I would encourage church leaders eager to win millennials back to sit down and really talk with them about what they're looking for and what they would like to contribute to a faith community.

The challenge of leadership for the church moving forward will be particularly difficult.

We will want to see change as something that we are willing to engage in; we will need to engage in change as a new normal in the church of the future. And we will be expected to invite the next generation into the change process—as they are transformed so they can be transforming.

Our destination is a journey of transformation—a journey of forming next-generation leaders, and a journey where we engage in the mission of Jesus Christ.

Engaging in Christ's Kingdom Mission

Mission has been easy to agree on, because we have not done the hard work of trying to define it. It can be whatever it needs to be for one person and something completely different for someone else. We need to work toward greater understanding and clarity. It starts with heart commitments to radically follow Christ in mission together.

What does that include? It begins with sacrificial service.

Sacrificial Service

In 1 John 3:16-18 (NLT) sacrificial service is defined for us:

We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.

Jesus Christ laid down his life for us; we ought to lay down our lives. Sacrificial service means:

- We live like Jesus. We are the hands and feet of Christ. We pick up the towel and basin and wash feet.
- We serve the poor; we feed the hungry; we help the homeless; we reach out to the marginalized; we visit the prisoner.
- We serve willingly, sacrificially—just like Jesus did; sacrificially serving others so they can experience life change.

- We give our lives away for the benefit of others.

Preparation also includes authentic relationships.

Authentic Relationships

Authentic relationships are also a part of how we do mission. Again, in 1 John:

This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. If we love our Christian brothers and sisters, it proves that we have passed from death to life. [That's transformation.] But a person who has no love is still dead. Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them (vv. 11, 14-15, NLT).

Transformational mission happens where there is deep and honest relationship—where love is present. We can't be transforming without relationship, without authenticity, without love. Our sacrificial service has to flow out of a heart of love.

We live like Jesus because we love like Jesus. Not because it's the right thing to do, or because it makes us feel good—or even solely out of obedience.

What good is it if you serve me and you don't love me? Or if I serve you and don't love you? That's a transaction; that's not transformation. Radically following Christ in mission together calls us to authentic relationship.

And the third thing it calls us to is spiritual transformation.

Spiritual Transformation

1 John 3:23-24 says:

And this is his commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us. Those who obey God's commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.

Believe. Love. Live. Obey his commands.

And the Spirit lives in us. Death to life; John is describing our transformation—a spiritual transformation.

What good is sacrificial service without spiritual transformation? It may change circumstances and situations, but transformation, spiritual transformation, changes people forever.

Where is God calling us to go?

- To a place that will change us—not just individually, but corporately as the body of Christ.
- To a place that will bring life change to others.
- To a place that will see a next generation formed to influence their generation with a passion for God that is greater than the current generation's.

- To a place that will transform communities, in addition to churches and people.
- To a place that will bring glory to God.

We want to begin to give language and vision to this journey, so we are asking you to be involved.

We have designated a wall in the back of the auditorium; it is our Transformation Wall. We would like to invite you to help us see and define transformation in the RCA.

At the top of the wall it very simply states: “Transformation Is...”

We would like you to finish the statement. It might be by defining transformation in some way. It might be in sharing a story from your own life. It might be telling us how transformation is happening in your church or in your classis or in your community.

God is already working. Transformed and Transforming is an ongoing and increasing activity in the RCA. We want to celebrate it. We want to share it. We want to communicate it so we can see the change God is bringing and offer hope in the challenging places and situations where we pray for the Spirit’s empowerment in the days, months, and years ahead.

It is a journey that starts with preparation; it is God calling us to a destination of his choosing; and it is also a journey that requires connection.

CONNECTION

How will we journey together? There is a “we” in the question *Are we there yet?*

Some people might like to make a transformational journey alone, but most of us enjoy, value, and recognize that we engage in this journey together. As important as the question *Where is God calling us to go?* is, the question *How will we journey together?* is equally important.

How do people who have been transformed by Jesus Christ and who desire to live and love like Jesus in the world love one another?

As I engaged in the “Spaghetti Tour” with Joel Boot earlier this year, meeting with RCA and CRC leaders in the United States and Canada, we told the story of our separation—including the story of the conflict at Pillar Church in Holland, Michigan. That story shares the depth of pain experienced when one group of people says to another, *We don’t want to be one in Christ with you.*

How does that work? John 13:35 (NIV) says, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

The New Living Translation puts it this way: “Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

How can we live and love like Jesus if we don’t love one another? How can we bring transformation into the hearts and lives of others, into neighborhoods and communities, if we don’t love one another? How can we truly sacrificially serve, if we don’t love one another?

How can we have authentic relationships, if we don't love one another? How can we start new churches, give a cup of cold water, send our next generation to the mission field, if we don't love one another?

We will have nothing to prove—we will not be disciples of Jesus Christ; we will not live and love like Jesus.

“Just as I have loved you, you should love each other” (John 13:34, NLT).

We can sanctimoniously defend our positions, our conflicts, our personal agendas, our desire to be right, our unwillingness to listen to each other—or we can claim a moral higher ground.

We can do it in the name of the marginalized, less fortunate, or displaced; but all it proves is that we are not following the command of Jesus.

It will make for an unpleasant, strife-filled, laborious journey. We will not transform anything, and we will not show the world what the transformed people of God look like and how they live.

How we treat each other and live together this week can establish an entirely new environment for our journey together moving forward with Transformed and Transforming. We will be able to see if a new chapter will bring new commitments, or if we will do the same things, just with another name. And it begins with how we treat each other, how we journey together, how we love one another—breaking down the barriers and blockages in order to help one another and put our love into action.

In words that echo those of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3: If we start hundreds of churches, if we enlist thousands of volunteers, if we launch dozens of new soup kitchens or homeless shelters, if we visit prisoners and mentor at-risk youth, but we don't have love, we gain nothing.

And how we journey particularly applies to issues that threaten to divide us: responding to the LGBT community, the conscience clauses, contemporary worship, commissioned pastors, and more.

Do we say again: “We don't want to be one in Christ with you”? Or do we look at biblical and historical precedents for how the church works through disagreement in love, whether it be Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council, the ecumenical council called together by Emperor Constantine in 325 at Nicaea, or the Synod of Dort in 1618-19.

You might think that our General Synod should be the kind of place to have the conversation, and there may have been times in our history when we conversed in that manner.

Today with the reports of eleven commissions, four boards, five institutions, multiple task forces, with General Synod serving more as an ecclesiastical corporation than an ecclesial council, we have limited time, opportunity, and focus.

We need to ask how can we create space to look at Scripture together, to worship together, to share our hearts on matters that are too important to try and get a majority vote so we can retain power. As a denomination we need to live out being scripturally rooted and pastorally sensitive—both outwardly and inwardly—as we are the church.

Where is the love?

The joy of the journey will be discovered in not only what we pursue, but in how we pursue it. A fifteen-year journey for a denomination requires preparation; it requires bringing clarity to the destination; it demands connection, and it calls lastly, for dedication.

DEDICATION

How committed are we to the journey? Dedication begs the question of motivation: Why are we engaging in the journey?

Pessimists and cynics would point to a last ditch effort at survival, at trying to save an institution, at perpetuating an outdated system of ethnic northern European origin. Having walked through the last three years—from congregational workshops, to Conversations, to twenty-four Discovery events, to multiple General Synods—prayerfully seeking the Holy Spirit’s leading, submitting to God’s directing, and asking:

- How is God at work within you?
- How is God at work through you?
- How is at work ahead of you?

...listening as church leaders shared hopes, ideas, and dreams of a denomination engaged in mission and on a mission....

I know—both for myself, and for the majority of us—we believe that God is calling us to a commitment and focus that is Transformed and Transforming.

Every journey has a cost, and we must check our motivation and calling to ensure that we are willing to pay the price. It must be a cause and commitment that is worthy of giving our life to and engaging in.

I believe that is the invitation that God has offered us as the Reformed Church in America through Transformed and Transforming. It will require our best efforts, our best thinking, and our best energy. It will require our time. It will require our resources—especially our finances.

This synod will vote on a special assessment to help launch Transformed and Transforming. Rather than an every-year increase, General Synod Council will propose an assessment that we hope will be for just this next year—rather than being perpetual—to fuel the launch of Transformed and Transforming.

For some churches it will be a stretch. It will require all of us to evaluate our level of dedication. It will cause us to have to walk by faith. We will be asked how committed we are to the journey.

Yes, this will be challenging. Yes, we will be called to imagine new possibilities. We will need to trust God to provide.

Yes, this is different—it is another change. Yes, we will need to view this as a divine opportunity through eyes of faith. Yes, I invite you to begin praying now for how God is calling us to a new level of dedication that includes believing God will provide where God guides.

Beginning this fall, we will also begin a capital campaign—an effort to raise resources beyond assessments for the Transformed and Transforming journey.

Our dedication is not only assessment-based—we see visionary leaders who are willing to give above and beyond their local church to this cooperative effort of transformational mission to which we have been called by God.

Please pray for this campaign—for those who will be involved in it and for how God might be asking you to participate personally. I know it is a prayer that my wife, Laura, and I will engage in, as we will be personally involved.

Dedication will be seen in how you leave this General Synod.

Two on-ramps to Transformed and Transforming are Explore and Engage. Explore helps a congregation walk through the Transformed and Transforming document: to read the priorities and statements that were developed and approved through the three-year discernment process, to discover the Scripture passages that are the foundation for this journey.

Explore is a two-hour experience that can be part of a consistory meeting or as the basis of a Sunday school class or a Tuesday night or Saturday morning leaders gathering.

The other on-ramp is Engage. Engage is the next-step experience to take once people in your congregation have explored what Transformed and Transforming actually is. Once they've done that, you can move on to ask: *How can our congregation uniquely engage in Transformed and Transforming?*

How do you live out God's unique calling for your congregation within your specific context? Transformed and Transforming will not be about your church engaging in denominational programs—it will be your commitment to living and loving like Jesus personally and corporately as you are led by the Holy Spirit. It will be process-based—not program driven.

There are ten Transformed and Transforming initiatives that you can read about in your Explore/Engage packet—plus there's Team Next, which focuses exclusively on next-generation issues and engagement. These are exciting teams dedicated to help equip and uniquely engage churches in Transformed and Transforming.

The role you play as a church leader is to take this information home and help your congregation enter these on-ramps in order to participate in the journey together.

If you are thinking about what transformation might look like in your church, another opportunity to explore that here at General Synod is the Transformation Lab.

Key denominational staff will be serving in the Transformation Lab, which is located above the stairs by the entry to the auditorium. It is an opportunity to bounce ministry ideas off some wonderful RCA thought-leaders who are helping to lead the charge in Transformed and Transforming.

They can provide counsel, advice, and coaching as you test out transformational ministry ideas for your congregation and community in the Transformation Lab. I hope you will take advantage of time with these transformational leaders with frontline ministry experience.

We are moving from preparation to destination to connection to dedication. From being ready for a significant and lengthy journey, to defining where we are going and what it means, to recognizing that how we engage is as important as what we engage in, and finally, to testing our devotion and dedication in living out the journey.

We can embrace the challenges and difficulties that will come, we can persevere as people of faith knowing our future is not just for our benefit, but we have been called to be a blessing as we live and love like Jesus.

Our greatest dedication must really be ourselves as we live in total devotion to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God is at work within us, through us, and ahead of us. God is calling us forward to be the reformed people of God, serving together as a gathered coalition—thriving, missional, and multiracial.

It is a vision of transformation, a vision of change, a vision of God's preferred future for us. I would like to invite you to join me in a prayer of transformation as we take this next step in the journey together.

There is a prayer card on your table. Let us share in this prayer in seeking the Holy Spirit's empowering and God's directing for what it will mean for the RCA to become Transformed and Transforming.

Prayer of Transformation

Lord, transform us—not for our benefit, but for the benefit of our world.

Do your work in me—

molding me,
making me,
shaping me,
changing me

to be the new creation you have called me to be in Christ Jesus.

Do your work in our church—

Help us to be the body of Christ

engaged in mission,
testifying to the power of our faith,
witnessing to the presence of our living and loving Savior, Jesus Christ.

Help us surrender the church back to you.

It is yours, not ours.

Let us lay aside our personal agendas and preferences so we can be fully committed to your calling for us.

Do your work in our world—

Give to us a vision of transformed lives, neighborhoods, and communities and how we can partner with you

to see what can happen when people of faith make an eternal
difference—
living and loving like Jesus
and giving themselves fully—heart, mind, and strength—
to be the very presence of Jesus Christ in our world,
bringing blessing and redemption
for the glory of God!

Amen!

Are we there yet? No, we're just beginning.

And God is going to bring us much joy in the journey as we put our faith into action and live and love like Jesus—engaging as the transformed people of God who are transforming our world.

ⁱ www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2014/04/11/301969264/millennials-talk-to-god-but-fewer-rely-on-religion-survey-finds

ⁱⁱ <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2013/07/27/why-millennials-are-leaving-the-church/>