

Renewing

Understanding the context of mission today

REACH
Renewing, Engaging
and Advocating Churches

Session 1

Moving Forward Together: A Story from the Philippines

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Community is a significant core value of my leadership and ministry in the educational institution I am currently serving. I view community as a life-constituting principle, orienting compass, ethical norm, spiritual vehicle, and organizing strategy. This core principle has guided and informed my vision, goals, strategic initiatives, and style of leadership and governance. I start with the assumption of the fundamental nature of community: we are not individuals first and then join a community; we are individuals only because we belong to a community and communities. Community belonging is a basic human need. The destiny of one is intertwined with the destiny of the community. I am because we are (the African concept of “Ubuntu”).

I have employed “ubuntu” ways of thinking and doing in leading the various stakeholders of the educational institution I am serving who, in spite of avowed claims that they are a community with a common mission and shared values, often behave as if the interest of one were antagonistic to the other. In this setting, I have to articulate clearly the mission of the institution and the common interest, not the watered-down least common denominator, if the institution is to move forward toward its vision. As a leader I work hard so that the various stakeholders (church denominational leaders, Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, etc.) own the vision and, consequently, actively play a distinct and important role in realizing the vision.

If we want to go fast, we must go alone; but if we want to go far, we must go together, says an African proverb. Or, following Thich Nhat Hanh, “If we are a drop of water and we try to get to the ocean as only an individual drop, we will surely evaporate along the way. To arrive at the ocean, [we] must go as a river.”

The community is our river into the ocean of new possibilities!



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