

Report to Session of the Emerging Culture Class and Follow-on Discussions
September 1, 2008
Dave McGhee, Editor

Introduction

A joint adult Sunday school class was offered at Faith from June 8 through July 13, 2008. The “Emerging Culture” class curriculum from Intervarsity Press is based on the book “Emerging Hope” by Jimmy Long. The class was lead by an inter-generational team of Jerry Redus, Erin Cobb, and Dave McGhee. The class was well received and sparked many good comments. The final class included a small group discussion session addressing three questions:

- 1) Do the findings of the Emerging Culture study reflect what you see around you? Who? Where? How?
- 2) What activities might Faith need to add to interest or reach people from the emerging culture?
- 3) Do you have any concerns about Faith making changes to become more welcoming to the people of the emerging culture? If so, what are your concerns?

The compiled responses to these questions are documented in Appendix I. The answers cover a wide range of interest, excitement, creativity, and some doubt.

Prior to the last class it was determined that there was enough interest to continue the discussion in a small group setting for six weeks after the joint class ended. Fifteen to twenty people signed up for three different groups. The objectives and outline of these follow-on discussions is documented in Appendix II. The class material, discussion questions, and responses are documented in Appendix IV. This material was captured in as much of its entirety as possible because it was evident that the Holy Spirit was at work in these sessions and there was a desire not to compromise that. Appendix III contains a list of the follow-on discussion participants. Appendix V contains a copy of Faith’s “A Covenant for Shaping our Future” which was used during the follow-on Leadership discussion session.

Summary Observations

In general, it is obvious that the beliefs and benevolent values that founded Faith Church are still present. The Emerging Culture class and follow-on discussions have illustrated those same values are present in the emerging culture. However, the motivations for and approaches to these values are different. The primary differences, between the Modern and Emerging cultures, arise from the different times and experiences of these two groups.

The task of reviewing all these responses and summarizing them is difficult. However it is apparent that Faith Church needs to take a holistic view of who we are and where we are.

- 1) The world we live in.
- 2) The different issues and brokenness that this world’s people have.

- 3) The differences in faith maturity among people both outside and inside the church.
- 4) God's desire and Jesus' example of ushering people from the world to God's Kingdom.
- 5) Faith's piece of fulfilling that mission.

Summarizing the follow-on sessions, let's first look at three of the main functions of the Church; witness, mission, worship. Here is an overall summary of the responses to both the bible study and discussion attempting to pull out the main themes, the detailed responses can be found in Appendix IV.

In the area of witness there is agreement about the central truth that God wants us to reach out and tell others about Him. The fact that God is constant is the needed primary witness to the emerging culture that perceives truth as relative. The main discussion themes included:

- 1) Reaching out to the poor-in-spirit not necessarily the poor. A Fortune 500 CEO, a soccer mom, or a crack addict could be equally lost (or saved).
- 2) Reaching out to current members is just as important. We are all at different places on the journey.
- 3) We at Faith are uncomfortable delivering this message.
- 4) We need to REJOICE more over each other's spiritual progress on the journey.

Mission in Church terms is following Jesus' example in delivering the witness message. The worldly emerging culture views mission as altruistically helping those in need. The main themes of agreement included:

- 1) Mission is about building relationships that allow us to witness.
 - a. We build relationships with those we help.
 - b. We build relationships with those we serve with.
 - c. We build relationship with God when we pursue His work.
- 2) A common focus on mission supports unity.
 - a. There was less agreement whether this should be a common mission or a more diverse group of missions. But it was agreed that a common focus on mission could be unifying. Also, at least occasionally, common mission projects can be useful in building unity.

In the area of worship there is agreement that worship is what God wants, what heaven will be, and should be a response to God. Worship is not really on the emerging culture radar, but there is a definite spiritual yearning and a desire for community. The main themes included:

- 1) When discussing worship we tend to consider it as a tool to attract newcomers.
- 2) We need to approach worship as a personal and corporate response to God of those present.
- 3) We need to celebrate our experience of God by telling our stories.
- 4) We need to be open to a wide range of worship experiences to relate to other's responses and keep worship fresh, alive, and renewed.

In the areas of witness, mission, and worship there is agreement that we should faithfully approach these activities as God has intended and Jesus has demonstrated. God will then use Faith to attract newcomers by providing missional relationships that allow personal witnessing and the opportunity to experience God through worship.

Another area of the curriculum that was considered and discussed was “Context”. This section addresses the fact that God’s Kingdom is meant for all. The curriculum focused primarily on ethnic divisions but the group discussions expanded it to any marginalized group. The key theme was that many of these marginalized groups are “candidates” when we are searching for mission focus. While all these groups are equal in God’s Kingdom that doesn’t necessarily mean that Faith’s particular mission(s) needs to focus on them all.

The final two areas discussed are Communication and Leadership. These areas are primarily concerned with how we go about performing the previous mandated tasks.

Much of the communication portion of the curriculum centered on the wider use of media that the emerging culture is familiar with. It drives home the point that the message can’t be heard if it isn’t translated into the local language. It was pointed out during the discussions that the media is important but that more importantly it is the content and conveying the “experience” of God that is ultimately fruitful. This strikes true as God is beyond dimension and trying to convey that requires many different avenues of communication.

There was also a common theme that Faith does a less than adequate job of communicating its ongoing activities. Meeting and event notices are easily available. However, readily available information about mission, committee, diaconate, and day-to-day activities that would foster involvement is harder to come by. Avenues for soliciting member-at-large insights and inputs are also difficult to identify.

(Editor’s note: This was not discussed but the editor feels that the wider use of modern communications is needed. The emerging culture is information savvy and hungry. Weekly bulletin, email, monthly newsletter are good. The website should be more than just an advertisement to newcomers. In today’s world it should be the communication hub of Faith; an outward sign of a healthy active congregation. Faith would do well to support the connection between our responsibility of witness and the emerging culture’s need for experience through the use of blogs. Combining cold information and personal witness by blogging mission and other activities will spur personal involvement.)

It’s been said, “Communicate, communicate, communicate. Then do it again.”

Finally, the leadership discussions centered on the idea that the emerging culture is more team and community oriented by nature. These traits carry forward into how the emerging culture leads and perceives its leaders. In developing new leaders, the Emerging Culture curriculum emphasized the traits of community, character, vision, and

journey. The “Covenant for Shaping our Future” adopted by Faith’s Session in January 2006 was brought to group’s attention for discussion.

The main themes in the leadership discussion included:

- 1) It was agreed that the covenant reflects a leadership model needed in the emerging culture.
- 2) An active, Christ centered, and Spirit filled life at Faith will require numerous and frequently changing teams of called people.
- 3) Further guidelines and boundaries for team formation need to be developed to empower the emergence of teams and free Session and Diaconate to discern, architect, and guide the overall spiritual direction, mission, and nurture of Faith Church and its members.

Recommendations to the Session

- 1) Trust God and the Holy Spirit. They are here and at work in Faith Church.
- 2) Continue working the unity issues. These are difficult issues but progress is being made.
- 3) The “Covenant for Shaping our Future” is Christ centered, respectful of all people, and responds to the needs of the emerging culture.
 - a. Continue the plan of communicating it to the membership for adoption.
 - b. Develop the strategies for implementing it and communicate how those strategies tie to the covenant.
- 4) The format of the weekly worship services can be a contentious subject. When deciding on worship service changes:
 - a. We need to approach worship as personal and corporate responses to God of those present not anticipate newcomer’s responses.
 - b. We need to be open to a wide range of worship experiences to keep worship fresh, alive, renewed, and respond to newcomer’s needs when they settle here.
 - c. Consider carefully if changing a service or adding a service is more appropriate.
- 5) Revitalize the mission life of Faith church. The responses from these Emerging Culture classes show many ideas and much energy waiting to find an outlet. Possibly more energy than can be channeled regularly through Session & Diaconate channels?
 - a. Create an environment to allow committees and ad hoc teams of called people to accomplish things. This Emerging Culture follow-on activity is a good example of a successful and respectful team.
 - i. Lay out the guidelines and boundaries for such teams and communicate them.
 - b. Develop a mission plan to provide focus and direction.
 - i. Possibly a few different mission paths to give the Spirit room and allow Faith to find its primary path.
 - ii. Identify mission resources and/or needs.
- 6) Improve the avenues of communication to the broader membership, regular attendees, and visitors.

- a. Define guidelines and boundaries for publicly viewable information and blogs. Foster open group and team communication.
- 7) Faith members are uncomfortable with witness. Efforts should be made to provide training and examples in sharing our “God experiences” when the opportunities are presented.
- 8) Events, large and small, on our individual and corporate journeys with Christ are worthy of celebration! We need to find ways to better acknowledge and celebrate these moments.

Conclusion

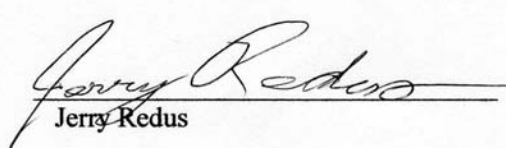
The experience of the Emerging Culture class and the follow-on discussions has been enlightening and motivating. The insights gained about the general nature of the emerging culture will prove very useful in carrying forward Faith’s mission. It should be noted, one more time, that the emerging culture characteristics presented in the curriculum and discussions apply to a general group and not necessarily to individuals.

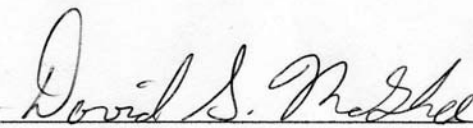
It is immensely reassuring that underlying unity is apparent in the responses of the discussion participants and yet shows up as diverse and individual expressions! Understanding the underlying needs of the emerging culture and how similar they are to those of the modern culture also demonstrates why Jimmy Long titled his book, on which the curriculum is based, “Emerging Hope”.

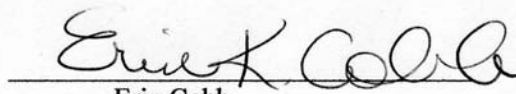
None of the witness, mission, or worship observations are new and they shouldn’t be. As humans we just have a tendency to forget and focus on more worldly issues. Being reminded of them is always welcome. The insights into communication and leadership the curriculum and discussions offered will hopefully provide a spark and avenue to move forward with God’s mission in today’s world.

Several recommendations to the Session have been made for their prayerful consideration.

We believe God is poised to use Faith to renew all of us who are members and to attract newcomers by providing missional relationships that allow personal witnessing and the opportunity to experience God through worship.


Jerry Redus


Dave McGhee


Erin Cobb

Appendix I: Final Class Discussion Notes

Question 1) Do the findings of the Emerging Culture study reflect what you see around you? Who? Where? How?

- Weren't surprised by the material presented, seems to describe what is seen in our culture
- What do churches like The Rock do to attract EC folks?
- Yes and No. The situation is still overwhelming, but we need to do God's work together regardless of age. All age groups have something to contribute.
- I do not see a lasting culture change. I see young leaving the church because it is too structured. The church is changing but I do not like it.
- Yes, information processing perceiving Christianity as "unchristian" in emerging culture.
- Shorter attention span – Who? Single parent household, younger generation – Where? Everywhere – How? TV, media, publishing, internet
- Yes. Periodically look around and explore approaches to Sunday School that will apply but do not eliminate existing classes without seeing if this will close some class approaches that current classes
- Yes, my children. Understanding what Christianity about. Young people want to be different from elders.
- Don't assume young know what Christianity is about.
- The early service reflects changes to the emerging culture:
 - A. Different types of music
 - B. Visual aids
 - C. Faster pace
 - D. More relaxed

Question 2) What activities might Faith need to add to interest or reach people from the emerging culture?

- invite people to come to community-based service issues; service last
- how to win people to Christ: love them first
- people are looking for a sense of community, not just great worship service?
- Use the Networking class to better utilize members' gifts, talents, call
- More advertising, etc.
- Station a 20-something at the door with the minister to personally greet others who look same age to invite them back to church or to a specific activity others will be attending
- Have people of same age call visitors of same age after the visit
- Let the 20-somethings plan activities (mission, pot-luck, movie) so visitors will have somewhere to go.
- Call by minister, elder, lay person. Visit them at home if OK. A "personal" invitation
- Emphasis – Point out under 40's in church and over 40's reach out to them at that time.

- Find out what they are interested in and see if it fits one of our church groups. If there is no fit consider starting a new group that does fit.
- Be a strong welcoming church. This was what Faith church has always done.
- Evening get together to accommodate different schedules
- Activities that start with relationships and young people
- Mission driven
- Continue to refine church website, streaming video
- Loss of focus on young parents
- What are peoples needs, emotional, handicapped people
- Age related activities
- Building relationships
- Focus on their needs not activities selected in a vacuum, same age specific to all for this day and age – singles ministry
- Always have programs for children K-12, college age as much as possible
- Be open to new ideas, interesting activities for youth

Question 3) Do you have any concerns about Faith making changes to become more welcoming to the people of the emerging culture? If so, what are your concerns ?

- One form of worship will not work for every generation
- Presbyterians talk, talk, but don't walk the walk (example: cold-calling, door to door)
- You have to get up out of the pews to make it happen
- Have to be more evangelistic
- We like the concept of adding, but this brings issues about resources
- Don't alienate people already here through massive change
- Create activities that bring different ages together
- Concern is age groups are splitting apart. Need more activities like emerging culture class that purposely bring together varying age groups
- Yes! Faith church is loosing too many members because of our changes. New cultures usually do not last. Faith church needs to return to the ways we were.
- Individual needs in worship verses community needs of worship (made up of individuals)
- Increase personal one on one communication and interaction
- We have to be accepting of changes that are evolving
- "Welcoming" is partly about the 1st 2 minutes and 1st visit. It is also about having content, programming, pastoral approach, etc. for sustained periods.
- Only 2 people under 40 at joint Sunday School! If we are not intentional about targeting age groups, related needs, we will simply age and die off. That is not Faith's heritage.
- Make sure people of all ages have their needs and interests met.
- We don't want to lose anymore people. We don't want to alienate anyone.

Appendix II: Follow-on Session Outline

Based on Leader's Guide

The objectives of these follow on discussions are:

- 1) Listen!
- 2) Answer any lingering questions about the material
- 3) Gain some biblical insight why its important to reach out to the poor-in-spirit
- 4) Identify Faith's current good practices and values
- 5) Discuss potential forward activities
- 6) Report to Session findings, recommendations, needs

3 alternate sessions each Sunday on 5 consecutive Sundays in Education Building Room
209:

8:30-9:30 am

9:30-10:30 am

10:30-11:30 am

6th Sunday is a joint class, 9:30-10:30 in the Fellowship Hall.

Session 1 – July 27 – Erin prep

Chapter 3 Witness

- 1) Short Intro/summary (5 min)
- 2) Scripture study (15 min)
 - a. Luke 15 parables
- 3) Discussion (20-30 min)
 - a. ?
 - b. ?
 - c. ?
- 4) What do we need to tell Session? What do we need from Session? (10 min)

Session 2 – August 3 – Erin prep

Chapter 5 Context

- 1) Short Intro/summary (5 min)
- 2) Scripture study (15 min)
 - a. Genesis 11:1-10
 - b. Genesis 12:1-3
 - c. Acts 2:1-12
- 3) Discussion (20-30 min)
 - a. ?
 - b. ?
 - c. ?
- 4) What do we need to tell Session? What do we need from Session? (10 min)

Session 3 – August 10 – Jerry prep

Chapter 4 Communication

- 1) Short Intro/summary (5 min)
- 2) Scripture study (15 min)

- a. Exodus 3:1-10
 - b. Exodus 32:1-8
 - c. Jeremiah 29
- 3) Discussion (20-30 min)
- a. ?
 - b. ?
 - c. ?
- 4) What do we need to tell Session? What do we need from Session? (10 min)

Session 4 – August 17 – Dave prep

Mission & Worship

- 1) Short Intro/summary (5 min)
- 2) Scripture study (15 min)
 - a. Mark 12:28 – 31
 - b. Matthew 28:16-20
 - c. Luke 4:8
 - d. Revelation 15:1-4
- 3) Discussion (20-30 min)
 - a. ?
 - b. ?
 - c. ?
- 4) What do we need to tell Session? What do we need from Session? (10 min)

Session 5 – August 24 – Dave prep

Chapter 2 Leadership

- 1) Short Intro/summary (5 min)
- 2) Scripture study (15 min)
 - a. John 13:1-11
 - b. John 13:12-16
 - c. John 15:8-11
 - d. John 15:12-17
- 3) Discussion (20-30 min)
 - a. ?
 - b. ?
 - c. ?
- 4) What do we need to tell Session? What do we need from Session? (10 min)

Session 6 – August 31 (tentative, Labor Day) – All prep

Joint wrap-up (When?)

- 1) Consolidate notes
- 2)?
- 3)?

Appendix III: Follow-on Participants

Leaders: Jerry Redus, Erin Cobb, Dave McGhee

The leaders wish to gratefully acknowledge the participants in the follow-on discussions!

Participants:

Chris Hyde

David & Lori Smith

Debbie Bennick

Debbie Lott

Diane Captain

John Haley

Keith & Lynn Bucher

Karl Rass

Lisa Jackman

Marilyn McGhee

Sarah Curtis

Don Wolfe

Scott & Elissa Holder

Hikmat Antonios

Jerry & Sheryl Shelton

Appendix IV: Follow-on Session Notes

Session 1: Witness (July 27, 2008)

Witness Overview

Reference, “Emerging Culture Participant’s Guide,” pgs 36-37.

GREAT COMMISSION

The Great Commission as a biblical mandate resonated in modern culture. The Great Commission is centered on truth (teaching) and self (disciples). However, a new mandate may be needed in the emerging culture, possibly the Great Commandment. The Great Commandment focuses on relationships (neighbor and community).

GREAT COMMANDMENT

BELIEF

In the modern culture, with its emphasis on intellectual truth, belief was the main point in witness. People wanted something to believe in. Now, people have a deep desire to belong. A community to belong to is a crucial starting point in witness in the emerging culture.

BELONG

PRESENT TRUTH

In the recent past, people were concerned that what they believed had to be reasonable for the here and now. In the emerging culture, people are more concerned with issues of faith that can help them through their present confusion or suffering. They need to have future hope in the midst of an unsettling present or uncertain future.

ETERNAL HOPE

- *It was observed that emerging culture doesn't necessarily have Eternal Hope, but is seeking it through a variety of spiritual paths.*

CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS

When people believed in universal truth, there was a need to demonstrate truth to those who were intellectually skeptical. Classical apologetics, an intellectual defense of the gospel, was crucial. However, in a culture that does not believe in universal truth, it is more crucial to embody the gospel in our lives. People need to see Christians “walk the walk” not just “talk the talk”.

EMBODIED APOLOGETICS

INTELLECTUAL ASSENT

In modern culture we too often settled for people making a decision or intellectual assent to the Christian faith. There lives showed very little change before they became Christians. The good news today is that as people in the emerging culture consider becoming Christians, they aren't interested in a half-way commitment. They want to be totally committed to Jesus or not committed at all. So we should call them to commitment, not decision.

CALL TO COMMITMENT

Scripture Study: Luke 15

Is there a lesson for Faith Church in the parable of the lost sheep?

- *We are the 100 and should be concerned about the 1 who has fallen away. We should seek them out and rejoice when they return*
- *Lost need to be found! At the risk of all!*
- *If loss of one is acceptable, then another, then another, eventually ALL are lost.*

- *Pharisee's were not looking for lost sheep. Q: How would they have treated someone who came to them wanting to repent? (make amends? Repent is a New Testament word?)*

Is there a lesson for Faith Church in the parable of the lost coin?

- *Each person is important*
- *Coin was lost within the woman's own house. There are lost within our own house that need to be found.*

Is there a lesson for Faith Church in the parable of the prodigal son?

- *No matter what someone has done, must rejoice when they come to Christ*
- *Be abundant in welcoming everyone*
- *Don't use ecclesiastical terms in church but language the un-churched can understand*
- *We don't rejoice enough.*

Discussion

Where is our church currently strong in reaching experience-oriented, community-minded un-churched people?

- *Preschool*
- *Downtown Rescue Mission and community service projects, such as West Huntsville Elementary*
- *Operation Andrew*
- *Frank's work*
- *LOGOS was a good past example.*
 - o *While LOGOS was an extremely taxing endeavor in terms of manpower it was also very unifying because so many people were involved. No one suggested bringing it back...just that the spirit behind it was good and unifying.*
 - o *Q: Jack Ragland had been head of a committee a couple of years ago to look into a replacement Wednesday night activity after LOGOS went by the way side. Where does that stand?*

In what ways are our church weak in reaching experience-oriented, community-minded un-churched people?

- *Lack of confidence that we can do it (Don't know what to say or do)*
Uncomfortable approaching "outcasts" or witnessing to peers.
- *No focus or plan to help people get better at it*
- *Lack of ideas; not a lot of communication*
- *Little contagious passion*
- *No communication of activities (communication of who, what, etc.)*
- *Too much credit for Frank's work*
- *Help is focused on the poor (financial need), not the poor-in-spirit (spiritual need).*
- *Community outreach must continue although some in my group felt (strongly) that we are currently inwardly fragmented. Those felt that we needed to focus inward first in order to present a united front to the community and those we seek to serve.*

- *We need to find ways to plug people in to services/activities. Some are looking for opportunities to "be used" and haven't found them (or been asked).*
- *We need to do a better job of keeping tabs on the members who are already here. How are we doing? Is everyone okay and feeling connected?*

Additional discussion observations:

- *We need to approach those in the community who are actively seeking.*
- *Is there one mission that the entire congregation can get behind (from the very youngest members to the very oldest)? Working for a common goal can be a unifying experience. Preschool? 50th anniversary? other?*
- *Along the same lines as the above note about being inwardly strong and unified - it was suggested that we spend money to fix all the physical things that are wrong with our building. When our grounds and building are appealing and in working order we put our best face on for the community and those we are hoping to welcome into our family. (Editor's note: I believe at least some of this is currently happening with the painting work and planned carpet replacement.)*

What do we need from Session?

- *Prayerful consideration of how to get going.*
- *How can we build on what we have?*
- *Continue efforts to nurture and strengthen our current membership relationships.*
- *Common mission goals can be a unifying force.*
- *Communicate what we are doing, how folks can become involved.*
- *Newsletter devoted to mission (perhaps quarterly).*
- *Develop young leaders.*

Session 2: Context (August 3, 2008)

Context Overview

Reference, “Emerging Culture Participant’s Guide,” pgs 67-68.

“Our generation, without necessarily knowing it, is calling the church back to what the church has always been called to be—a multi-generational, multi-cultural, open, orthodox and culturally engaged body of believers. This is what the church will need to be in order to speak to the postmodern culture with any legitimacy.”

- Dieter Zander, Re:Generation Quarterly

MODERN

World Unity

Up to at least the middle of the twentieth century much of the world expected international unity and cooperation under the auspices of organizations such as the League of Nations or the United Nations. But as the century ended, instead of becoming more unified the world has become more tribalized, with little hope or desire for unity. Into this mix the church needs to demonstrate the unity of the kingdom of God, giving people a picture of the type of community God desires for all humans.

POSTMODERN

Tribalism

CHRISTIAN

God’s Kingdom

Human Progress

It was proclaimed in 1900 that the twentieth century would be “mankind’s” greatest century. The expectation of human progress and the desire for domination of nature turned to cynicism by the end of the century. Christians in the twenty-first century need to demonstrate hope not in humankind but in God.

Human Cynicism

Eternal Hope

Individualism

In the past century we moved from a heightened view of the rights of the individual to a begrudging tolerance of people different from us. The church must take a firm stand and in word and deed proclaim that God’s agape love demonstrates a much higher view of humankind than a mere tolerance of others.

Tolerance

Agape Love

Integration

From the beginning to the second half of the twentieth century, there was a concerted effort to integrate all ethnic groups into a melting pot. However, those who valued their ethnicity eventually realized that their heritage and traditions were being diminished. Thus they rejected the melting pot and began to emphasize their ethnicity. The church needs to show the world that we can have unity within our multiethnicity (without diminishing our own ethnicity).

Ethnicity

Multiethnicity

- *We are to be the example of God’s agape love, unity, and hope.*

Scripture Study: Genesis 11:1-10, Genesis 12:1-3, Acts 2:1-12, and Revelation 21:1-7

How did the people of Babel thwart God’s kingdom story?

- *Could do everything for themselves*
- *Making a name for themselves*
- *Not working in the name of God*

Compare the people of Babel's response to God's kingdom story and the response of Abram.

- *Abram followed God's plan for building God's kingdom and people.*

Why should all these events give us hope for the future?

- *Pentecost undoes Babel within the power of the Holy Spirit*
- *Free to choose God's plan or ours*
- *God's Kingdom will someday usher in a New Order of life with God*
- *We have hope for reconciliation and greater communication as emphasized in the Acts and Revelation passages.*

Additional observations:

- *Faith Church is scattering; if we return to Him, we will be blessed*
- *We are following our own wants, needs, and desires rather than following Him into the Promised Land*
- *We all have the right answers rather than the right questions; we need to grow in grace*

Discussion

What is the significance for Faith Church that God is the God of all ethnicities and that he desires to bring these ethnicities together?

- *Should be accepting of all*
- *It's difficult; a lot of cultural stuff in the way; uncomfortable; too much for single step*
- *Abram took the first step in following God*
- *Learn to be less rigid, more accepting, loving*

Are there other marginalized groups that God is calling us to minister to and welcome into our fold? Who might they be?

- *Many "groups"; homeless, alcoholics, AIDS, Respite Care, more...*
- *Communicate and get to know each other as people*
- *Mac's story: During one service a homeless man came in and sat down on the floor against the back wall of the Sanctuary. Mac Morrison came back and sat down with him.*
- *We are not ready to welcome marginalized people into our fold*
- *We are going to them, not inviting them to be a part of us; We go to the Downtown Rescue Mission and to West Huntsville Elementary School to minister; we are not successful in getting the residents or families to come to worship at Faith.*
- *Perhaps we're being called to GO OUT and bring church to THEM (the community and the marginalized) rather than wait for them to come to us.*
- *Our understanding of who is marginalized should be studied and expanded. Some thoughts: divorced people, singles, parents of children with challenges (eg. respite care), ethnic/racial minorities. WHO ELSE?*

What does this mean for Faith's identity?

- *Need a unifying mission*
- *Must be a balance of inward and outward or we could end up well adjusted but isolated*
- *We have no main thing we are behind*
- *How do we pick a main thing?*
- *If we have a main thing, it needs to be multi-faceted*

Are Faith Church's desires similar or different to God's desires? How?

How does God want to bless "all peoples" through Faith Church? What might that look like in specific terms?

- *We need to focus on practical solutions and things that can be implemented rather than lofty goals and ideals. When we communicate the needs of the emerging culture at the end of this discussion series we need to go to them with SPECIFIC IDEAS, not concepts. They have enough on their plates and will not know what to do with mere concepts.*
- *We know this has been revisited many times but there is a great need for our church to have a more visible, permanent, and (ideally) changeable sign. We believe there are many in our community that would be blessed by this church if they knew it was here. Erin Cobb indicated, "Our family almost missed the blessing of Faith Church because of the sign issue. We would be happy to share our story if the issue of signage ever comes up again."*

What do we need to tell Session?

- *Let go*
- *Pray*
- *Keep God before us; don't outrun Him*
- *Constantly ask if this is what He wants*

What will we need from Session?

- *Keep the discussion of emerging culture going in order to bring younger people without driving older away*
- *Continue to open the door*
- *Add and subtract programs; don't make massive changes*

Session 3: Communication (August 10, 2008)

Communication Overview

Reference, “Emerging Culture Participant’s Guide,” pgs 49-50.

MODERN

Word

As we have already seen, image has become a powerful tool within our culture. Our first response is usually that this is a negative change. However, God continually uses images to communicate with us. We need to be sure we use both word and image in our communication so we can connect with all the God-given senses each person possesses.

EMERGING

Image

Detached

In modern culture we were taught to be objective and thus remain detached from what we were studying. We were taught to reason with our mind and to check the passions of our heart. Today, however, while we still need to use our mind, we also recognize that none of us can be totally objective. We bring our own past understanding and thus should feel free to fully participate in the learning experience with both our mind and heart.

Participant

Didactic

Just as modernity taught us to be objective and detached, it also taught us that the didactic portions of Scripture were preferred to the stories or narrative portions. However, we are now discovering that Scripture is one big narrative of God’s kingdom story. The Scripture, our spiritual lives and our learning experience need to be couched within the narrative of God’s larger story.

Narrative

Knowledge

In the past we too often thought that the goal of communication was more knowledge. If we had more knowledge in our minds, we would use that knowledge for good. However, we have seen that knowledge by itself is not enough. Through the emerging culture Christians are being reminded that the true goal is not more knowledge but transformation. We need our hearts changed, not just our minds filled.

Transformation

Inward-focused

Communication in the latter part of the modern culture often centered on the individual, on ourselves. What is in it for me? was the question most frequently asked. But people in the emerging culture are not so self-centered; their focus is on the community. Hopefully, Christians will be reminded that the universe does not center around us but on God and what he wants to accomplish in us and through us in the surrounding communities.

Mission-focused

Scripture Study: Genesis Read to class Jeremiah 29: 10 – 14 (The Message)

¹⁰*This is God’s Word on the subject: “As soon as Babylon’s seventy years are up and not a day before, I’ll show up and take care of you as I promised and bring you back home.*

¹¹*I know what I’m doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.* ¹²*“When you call on me, when you come and pray to me, I’ll listen.* ¹³*“When you come looking for me, you’ll find me. “Yes, when*

you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else, ¹⁴I'll make sure you won't be disappointed." God's Decree. "I'll turn things around for you. I'll bring you back from all the countries into which I drove you"—God's Decree—"bring you home to the place from which I sent you off into exile. You can count on it.

- Ask people to listen as you read it again, this time listening for what it may say to each of them. Ask them to see if there a theme, an image, a phrase, or a word in there that they think they need to hear.
- Read it again slowly
- Ask them to take a few minutes to think about that idea they had and try to hear what God is saying to them in that theme, image, phrase, or word
- Ask people to share what they heard if they want to
 - o *The Lord's message in the Jeremiah passage and still to us today is: Don't worry, I'm in control. Trust. I am steadfast. Be reassured that I am with you.*
 - o *The Lord will not test Faith beyond what we can bear even as we are in a period of challenge.*
 - o *If today's fast-paced, out of control, over stimulated world is our Babylon, is Faith communicating the message that God is there for all who search for Him?*

Discussion

What are some of the differences words and images have in communicating in the church?

- *We are not good communicators*
- *We do not have a good visitors packet compared to other churches*
- *We do not have a three word message of our image*
- *We need to transmit information on a screen, which is where the emerging culture people are used to getting information (computer screens, cell phone screens, etc.)- engages younger people*
- *Being involved enhances communication*

How might our worship need to change in light of God's work in the emerging culture?

- *Don't forget the older – intermix*
- *Need to meld both generations*
- *Faith is rich in its use of word: corporate reading, sermon, scripture reading, newsletter; but is also incorporating image within the website, powerpoint slides, and the blended service.*
- *To engage the Emerging Culture we need to focus on word, image, and EXPERIENCES. The EC is really looking for ways to be involved and EXPERIENCE God - inside and outside of worship.*
- *It was also noted that there needs to be a focus on CONTENT as well as technique. Images can be perceived as "fluff" if they aren't backed up by solid scriptural teaching but words can also be "fluff" (e.g. many of the Christian phrases and scripture passages that we toss around without thought.)*

- *The worship committee is considering expanding off-campus worship opportunities such as the Downtown Rescue Mission worship service. This may help engage the Emerging Culture in the kind of experience they seek.*

Any changes needed in the 8:30 worship services or Fellowship Hall setup?

- *Better, more comfortable chairs that convey worship is not temporary but important*
- *Later time*
- *Define space for worship – visually separate the worship area and the peripheral stuff (snack table, name tag board, etc.)*
- *Like the way we are introducing hymns also*
- *Specific to the 8:30 service it was mentioned that a darker seating area might lend itself to a looser, more involved group of worshippers.*
- *If the 8:30 service is our more contemporary service then that's the service we need to be experimenting with and incorporating image and experience into.*

Any changes needed in the 10:30 worship service or Sanctuary layout?

- *Congregation sit in the front half of the sanctuary*
- *Fill up pews*
- *Like the way we are introducing new music with Bill or choir singing it*
- *Tasteful large screens on the angle walls behind the choir; projectors on walls between second and third pews, as recommended by a consultant*
- *Organize a ministry team with members that are involved in the arts to fill up the screens*

Other comments

- *New permanent pastor has been good*
- *Steve is a strong leader*
- *Offer more community service*
- *Discipleship group rotations help increase community*
- *Emerging culture class got to the crux*
 - o *Learning to do church the way God wanted*
 - o *It is a wake up call*
 - o *Embrace differences as good*
- *Faith has a unique message that needs to be shared*
- *In addition to worship, we must broaden our communication outreach to the many forms of communication available today; to the community and to each other*

What do we need to tell Session?

- *Everything we have said!*
- *Session has a big challenge to draw in young adults and keep them*
- *Must straighten out the internal conflict*
 - o *Unity team was drugs; need surgery to repair the wound*
 - o *Make sure the dissidents get the message about how the general congregation feels*

- *How can the church get wrapped around such petty problems?*
- *Unite around getting members out with prospective members on short-term outreach projects*
 - *Use the 50th anniversary as occasion to do stuff in the community*
- *In making changes, must address relationships, not just mechanics of worship*
- *As we make changes to attract younger people, do not drive away the old.*
- *Seek what God wants, not what any individual wants for the church*

Session 4: Mission & Worship (August 17, 2008)

Mission & Worship Overview

From Emerging Culture class 6 slides

- Mission

- Whether it's the Great Commission or the Great Commandment we are called to do the Lord's work
- Are we are being called to a tri-fold mission?
 - God has always called to help those less fortunate (the poor and poor-in-Spirit)
 - We are also being called to invite the emerging culture (the poor-in-Spirit) to work with us and us with them
 - “While God is doing things through us, he is also doing things in us.”
 - Reminding us how to experience God
 - Helping us regain unity and community
 - Strengthening and equipping us to reach out further, following the Holy Spirit's leading

- Worship

- This is not simply about changing *your* worship service!
 - God wants **you** to praise, experience, and worship him in a service that is true to who he made you to be
 - God wants that for others too
 - Its about being open to the wide range of worship experiences possible
 - Participating in worship that brings you into God's presence
 - Attending and supporting worship that reaches out to help others experience God
- Its about witnessing in the true sense; telling how God has worked in your life
 - Its about telling God's story by telling our stories
 - Its about understanding what has moved you will move others
 - Acts 4:18-20
 - 20 For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.*

Comments

- *2 services can divide congregation*
- *Have more frequent joint services*
- *Discipleship groups could deliberately intermingle attendees of both services*
- *Emerging culture (as a whole); mission goals are driven by altruism not religious.*
- *Worship not really on the EC radar, but a definite spiritual yearning and desire for community.*
- *Traditional church seen as hypocritical*
- *Worship is relational based, not media based. Can the worshipers identify with the message or Pastor?*
 - *“Boring is boring if its on a screen or not.”*

Scripture Study

- a. Mark 12:28 – 31
- b. Matthew 28:16-20
- c. Luke 4:8
- d. Revelation 15:1-4

What do these verses say about both mission and worship?

- *Luke: worship AND serve only Him*
- *Rev: worship is what He wants, what heaven will be*
- *Need to both worship and service in an unselfish way*
- *Mission and worship are interconnected the way faith and works are. You cannot have one without the other. The Gospel and Revelation passages make this clear.*

Discussion

A number of times we've reaffirmed that working in a common mission could serve to restore unity. What does that look like?

- *Start small, work up*
- *Noticed 50th anniversary posters*
 - o *Faith based on service to community*
 - o *Why aren't we inviting the community?*
 - o *Can we take portions of the celebration to the community?*
- *Not necessarily common mission but common mission focus*
 - o *Diverse implementations to a mission focus*
- *Using a common mission to restore unity is a great idea. We've touched on that in previous weeks and one member mentioned that she knows of thriving churches in the community who are doing just such a thing (eg. The Rock and their mission with Manna House). If Faith were to take on such a unifying mission it would need to be something that ALL members can participate in in some way - from the oldest to the youngest. Also, it was mentioned that if our goal is to unify the congregation then we may need to start with a FRESH and NEW mission focus.*
- *Faith currently has a lot of irons in the fire when it comes to mission but for new members (and even more established members) it's difficult to find out what's going on and how to get involved. There has recently been some improvement in this with the launch of the new, updated website though.*

How do we discern God's will for what that mission might be?

- *Improve communication; tap into what the Holy Spirit is telling others*
- *Discussion participants felt that the amount of committees that we have could be holding us back. "Doing church" is sucking energy and leaving little room for real spiritual nourishment of our members and, thus, outreach.*
- *Things that are holding us back from being a missional, worshipful congregation include: not being open to God's call; being wrapped up in activities and things that we've always done and that we're attached to (there was some very powerful personal testimony about this in our group); being afraid of making others mad with new ideas.*

Is worship a response or a tool? Who's?

- *Raised with worship as an obligation*

- *Today's understanding is more as a response to God*
- *Seems like we sometimes treat it as a tool to attract new members?*
 - o *Changing to attract (or conjecture) is not yielding to God's will*
 - o *Changing in response based on input of new members or regular attendees more in line with responsorial attitude*
 - o *Allow God to attract newcomers by doing God's work through mission and responsorial worship*
- *Variety does offer new views and keeps worship fresh, alive, renewed*

How do you personally want to respond to God in worship?

Thinking both inside and outside the Sunday morning box, what might Faith's weekly worship life look like?

- *Every pew full*
- *"Revival" type enthusiasm*
- *Church of Christ has "singing" service at separate time from Sunday morning*
 - o *Church of Christ doesn't allow instruments but we could have a variety of Christian music from old hymns to new releases*
 - o *Point out interesting hymn history*
- *Willowbrook starting a 5:00pm Sunday service*
- *Contemporary service prior to Sunday Youth activities*
- *Small group worship guidelines*
- *Rescue mission*
- *Doing what we are commanded to do; love each other!*
- *At the end of our discussion I asked each of the members to answer the "thinking outside the Sunday morning box" question for themselves (NOT for the church as a whole but for what THEY would like to see happen). All three participants said they would like to see our congregation worship together as one body every Sunday morning while still having an opportunity for a small contemporary worship experience at a nontraditional time (not Sunday morning). There was also emphasis on opportunities for people to fellowship with others of their age/life situation and activities for families and children to do together. It was also mentioned that physical changes can also be a statement of unity including things like the set up of worship and the removal of memorial plaques, etc. so that no one feels like the church belongs to any particular group or person. The church is the body - the members.*

Other comments:

- *Unity will be a problem until we decide to forgive one another, get on with our lives, our work*
- *Forgiving is easy, trust is difficult*
- *You can trust again! Turning to God to change your heart*

What do we need to tell Session?

Session 5: Leadership (August 24, 2008)

Leadership Overview

Reference, “Emerging Culture Participant’s Guide,” pgs 22-25.

The following list is neither exhaustive nor authoritative. However, it highlights the trends in the emerging leadership.

Modern Culture

Individual leader
Task-oriented
Positional authority
Perfect leader
Building structures
Control
Destination
Aspire to leadership

Emerging Culture

Team leadership
Community-oriented
Earned authority
Broken leader
Developing vision
Empower
Journey
Inspire for leadership

The following are four dynamics of leadership that are highlighted in the curriculum in terms of developing sustainable leadership in the emerging culture:

- Community
- Character
- Vision
- Journey

Reference: “A Covenant for Shaping Our Future”, found in Appendix V.

Scripture Study: John 15 & 17 as outlined in “A Covenant for Shaping Our Future”

These three commitments come from Jesus’ final teaching session with his disciples (John 15) and his high priestly prayer for the church the night of his arrest (John 17).

A growing Commitment to Christ

John 15:5, John 17:3, 6, 8, 9, 13, 17, 24 [Strung in that order.]

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” ... “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.”

- *We are God’s*
- *We belong to Christ*

- *Applies to Disciples or all? – Anybody who accepts & follows Jesus*
- *It is a challenge to accept*
 - o *We can't be good enough?*
 - o *Rugged individualism*
- *Difficult to communicate to EC*

A Growing Commitment to the Body of Christ

John 15:12; John 17:11, 21, 22, 23 [Strung in that order.]

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”... “I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name--the name you gave me--so that they may be one as we are one. That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. “

- *Glory!*
 - o *How are we showing it?*
 - o *Gift when you have faith in the previous “all in one” message*
- *Continually working on it*

A growing Commitment to the work of Christ in the world

John 15:26,27; 18-20 John 17: 18, 15-17, 25, 26 [Strung in that order.]

"When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world."... “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

- *Not an easy road*
- *Evil one*
 - o *Distractions*
 - o *Faith is distracted from Center*
- *Holy Spirit and Jesus are intervening, protecting*
- *Need to remind ourselves daily (at least) that we are Christ's and members of The Kingdom*
- *“Program” – set up over here and these folks are responsible*
- *“Mission” – we are all accountable*

Discussion

The covenant, while completely unrelated to the Emerging Culture class, seems to speak directly to the leadership model called for in the emerging culture. How?

- *We are on the right track with the covenant*
- *We work in the community with our hands*
- *The covenant reflects a team understanding of leadership based on gifts*
- *At present, Faith Church's leadership is focused on maintaining structure, not on developing vision; it is interested in structure*
- *The Covenant for Shaping Our Future spoke to all of us, in particular the "Characterized by decisions to be..." section. Some thoughts regarding that:*
 - o *It doesn't matter if a ministry is OLD or NEW, it HAS to have members who are passionate about it to make it work.*
 - o *We appreciated the reminder that ministries and programs should be NEED centered not activity centered.*

How does this covenant affect your view of how we have done, are doing, or should do leadership at Faith?

- *Faith DOES have an identity and legacy - one of loving respect and benevolence. As Dave said in one of his lessons: don't change, ADD! Niche is important and people are encouraged by positive peer-pressure and accountability to other members (eg. attending Sunday school. One of the weaknesses of the UofF model is that there is a lack of accountability amongst members because one doesn't know who to expect in attendance)*
- *The scripture passages and EC module reminded us that the job of our leaders is to create more leaders.*
- *We often make things more bureaucratic by the way we do things. The process should not be the ends. A decision needs to come out of the process. A long process, review, study, committee, etc. should not turn into a crutch for not making a decision or taking an action.*
- *We do many things out of fear. We react to things rather than being PROactive about things. We fear stepping on toes or going against the way we've always done things.*

The emerging culture would likely consider the Presbyterian leadership model bureaucratic and slow. How do we honor both?

- *Speed up; "decently and in order in a timely fashion"*
- *Find middle ground; slow vs fast; get things done vs listening for the Holy Spirit*
- *Focus on the important*
- *Need to cut loose of the Presbyterian model*
- *Focus on the Presbyterian idea of the ministry of the laity – that ministry emerges from the people*
- *Let teams emerge to do ministry, team leaders emerge from the team members, and let the Session members be in charge of communication between the teams and the Session*

- *Instead of people being allowed and encouraged to do what they feel gifted and called to do, Faith Church members put a lot of pressure on people to do things out of duty; this angers and alienates some members*
- *Many people that are used to the modern church are leaving Faith because of the lack of particular programs*
- *In regards to our Presbyterian heritage and government, we do not need to get hung up on every rule and stipulation. Jesus struggled with the leaders of his time over the letter of the law vs. the spirit of the law. Are we doing the same thing? Jesus came to fulfill the law NOT abolish it.*
- *As a final note one of our participants quoted a statement used in her community bible study: "You will disagree with others in your group and that will upset each other much more than it will upset God."*

The emerging culture are team players, attracted to service, and want to be involved but they may be slow to accept Christ and become members. How do we feel about non-officer, non-member, non-Christian folks being on teams?

- *Clarify question: Session and Diaconate must be Christian & members*
- *Great opportunity for them to be involved and grow in Christ*
- *They cannot be allowed to be in groups that define purpose of Faith*
- *Need to be encouraged along the path toward commitment*
- *Referring to the question regarding how we might feel about non-members, etc. being involved on committees and such one participant brought up that our Presbyterian heritage is one of open communion. All are welcome at table and fellowship with us. This spills over into church activities. Of course there are exceptions where non-members simply wouldn't have an interest in certain goings-on of the congregation but for the most part we see non-members as being welcome in all of our activities, programs, and teams.*

This ad hoc team or class was not officially started or authorized by Session, but it has not been outside their notice. It has been successful and respectful. Is there a place for ad hoc teams in our leadership model? What kind of guidelines or boundaries do you think Session needs to define?

- *Certainly a place, Absolutely!*
- *Added forum for people to speak*
- *Good example, as it responded to need*
- *Be faithful*
- *Lack of guidelines can be a barrier for some to participate; "It's not my place."*
- *Reporting back to Session is important and courteous*
- *I am upset with people who did not like it meeting parallel with the approved Sunday school class*

(Editor's note: Apparently some members felt the EC discussions running concurrent with the World Religions joint class did not conform to expectations of the church. This scheduling was carefully and prayerfully considered by the EC team and deemed to be responsive to the leadings of the Holy Spirit. All had a clear choice in discussion sessions and the impact to the World Religions class was negligible. Faith Followers had also resumed their regular class meetings.)

Appendix V: A Covenant for Shaping Our Future

Covenant adopted by Session January 2006

A Covenant for Shaping Our Future

A Congregation...

...Built on Three Growing Commitments

A growing Commitment to Christ John 15:5, John 17:3, 6, 8, 9, 13, 17, 24

Expressed through worship, personal spirituality, and the fruits of the Holy Spirit

A Growing Commitment to the Body of Christ John 15:12; John 17:11, 21, 22, 23

Expressed through small group and large group fellowship, godly relationships, and reconciliation

A growing Commitment to the work of Christ in the world John 15:26,27; 18-20 John 17: 18, 15-17, 25, 26

Expressed through ministry teams, personal and corporate evangelism and mission

These three commitments come from Jesus' final teaching session with his disciples (John 15) and his high priestly prayer for the church the night of his arrest (John 17).

...Guided by five core values

Grace - We will continually look for the application of the gospel to our own lives and the lives of others

Groups - We will create real community rooted in the gospel, not just common interests

Giving – We will exhibit a contagious love for our community, seeing Faith as a “church for others”

Growth – We will demonstrate a pioneer mentality, always looking forward to where God is leading

Gifts – We will build our ministry around the gifts of the various members of the body that Christ has gathered here.

...Characterized by decisions to be:

Christ-centered, not church-centered

The church is the messenger, Christ is the message.

People-centered, not program-centered

People come first not program. Programs exist to meet the needs of people; people do not exist to staff programs

Need-centered, not activity-centered

The primary question is: how do we meet people's needs, not how do we get people to participate in our activities.

Passion driven, not tradition driven

The ministries of the church are to be based upon calling (passion) of those God has placed here, not what we have always done before.

Facilitators, not gate-keepers

The role of the church body is to encourage and help people discover their gifts and calling and provide the resources for them to pursue that calling. That is very different from gate-keeping which says yes or no to people based upon leadership driven programs and priorities.

Defined by the Center, not the boundaries

Inclusive, involve all people of every age in the life of Jesus Christ. Accepting of all races and types of people based on the idea that everyone is a child of God and we love one another despite differences. What determines the life of the cell is the nucleus (Christ) not the cell walls.

Committed to process first, then outcome

How we decide, choose, or do things precedes what we decide, choose, or do. A process that engages, empowers, respects, and values all is as important as the outcome. Christ defines our process, not just our programs.

...Following Four Steps in starting and maintaining all ministries

1. Identify and articulate the need. A ministry must meet a need, but a need does not necessitate a ministry.
2. Gather the people. A ministry team of people who are appropriately gifted and exhibit a passion for meeting the need.
3. Prepare the plan. The vision and strategy meeting the need are worked out by the ministry team.
4. Affirm the leader. Without a leader who is willing to take responsibility, a ministry will quickly run into trouble.