

From: Joe Lochamy
Sent: Sunday, October 18, 2009 4:10 PM
To: Elders, ministers, Stacy Meyers
Subject: "Visioning" Form Results Discussion

Well, I've been on travel for the past month and I am not really in a small group, so I will comment on the results as a small group of one.

"Worship" (aka. Assembly) Session

The statements related to more congregational interaction resonate strongly with me. I like eating together on Sundays more. Greeting and talking to visitors and members is important, no matter how we do it. It strikes me as strange that we need a "minute" after the formalities begin. Why aren't we meeting people like crazy for the full 15 minutes between SS and Assembly? OK, some visitors may arrive late; we have almost unlimited time immediately following the formalities. I believe the problem lies not with lack of opportunity but with lack of motivation. So I believe our real problem with meeting, greeting, and eating is not that we don't have enough chances--we don't care enough to take the chances we have. Thus, we need to deal with the **individual spiritual problem of not caring enough about others to interact personally with them and not realizing that the time before/after the formalities is as much a part of "assembly" as the formal part**. Once we address the spiritual problem, all the greeting, etc. will take care of itself. The alternative is just to FORCE people to do it during a special minute.

Sermons--The clearly stated purpose of the assembly is to encourage and build up. So the prime focus of sermons during assembly should be to encourage and build up. Scholarly scripture study lessons can be encouraging, and they are fine for the assembly, but I am for the lessons whose purpose is primarily to build up and encourage. Personally, I think classes are the best place for detailed "Bible" study.

I have no strong opinion about the other items in this section, but, if we adopted every item in this section, would that solve or significantly improve our previously stated problems of

1. Lack of positive movement in Sunday School.
2. Lack of sufficient leadership and participation in Children's Church.
3. (Mostly young) families leaving.
4. Accusation of lack of love/concern for children.
5. Lack of spiritual development.

Leadership

Of course we could use more elders. I don't think you can have too many elders, assuming they are chosen for their spiritual/teaching abilities and not their business management skills. Business management is totally a function of the ministers ("deacons"). And you never can have too many good deacons/ministers, either. One elder will ALWAYS tend to stand out (whatever that means)--that fact is a simple function of personality and other personal characteristics. But all elders should be able to and should **teach** in SOME (not necessarily formal classroom) capacity and be actively involved in cultivating the spiritual health of the congregation.

Again, if we adopted every suggestion in this section, would that solve or significantly improve our previously stated problems?

Education

Hiring more staff is a business way of looking at the education issue. Just trying to get more people in the SS seats is not going to produce any value, unless there is a reason (that THEY see) for being there. We need to ask what we need to do to spiritually educate everyone, children, young adults, seniors, everyone, not just one or two special groups. To me, our biggest educational problem is lack of

motivated, capable teachers. That fact seems to zero in on all of our stated problems above. So how do we get a more adequate "stable" of good, motivated teachers? I am not sure, but I do know that it is related to the stated issue of lack of spiritual growth.

Programs

All good programs, such as those mentioned, are...well...good. With the proper resources, we could have thousands of "programs." But who will step up and say, "I want to work in this program?" Or, "I will be in charge of this program?" Or, "I want to give a truckload of money to this program." Having the "right" programs will not solve anything. Having committed, working people will. We seem to be back to the individual spiritual issue again, don't we?

Again, if we adopted every suggestion in this section, would that solve or significantly improve our previously stated problems?

Relationships

All of the items mentioned are fine. But these are also mostly "programs."

Again, if we adopted every suggestion in this section, would that solve or significantly improve our previously stated problems?

Cooperation/Community

All of these things are fine, many of them also being "programs." The only thing holding us back is for someone to come forward and say, "I will make this happens."

Again, if we adopted every suggestion in this section, would that solve or significantly improve our previously stated problems?

Conclusion

I really don't care if we do all or none of these 57 things or a totally different set of things. The real issue that addresses ALL of our perceived problems is a lack of committed, willing, volunteering, working people. It is and always seems to have been, "**They** ought to do thus and so," rather than, "**I** will take charge and do thus and so." Part of that problem, for us, may be because a large part of our congregation is pretty senior and possibly, due to health, no longer able to do that much. However, being retired and relatively physically/mentally healthy (which many are) should be the time in our lives when we are able to serve the most. So, I guess the age issue can work both ways.

It really just comes down to each person finding something of value to do and doing it--no program, no organization, no nothing--just, "I see a good work and I am going to handle it."

After saying all of this stuff, I now see that I only have only one goal, one job I must do--I must do everything I can to encourage and increase the spirituality of our congregation and, thus, increase the individual willingness of members to volunteer and work on caring about others, teaching others, serving others. To some extent, I can accomplish my job by **example**. I can also move in that direction with the **positive attitude** that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. And I will be changing any **teaching** I do in the future to focus entirely on how to become a more willing, better servant of God. And I will leave it to God to give the increase.

(Father, please return me home, soon, to my family, so that I can participate more fully in doing my REAL job.)

Love.
Joe