



Sunday August 24, 2014

A Collection of Musings
and Ideas from the Pastor

I Wish I had Said That

Every now and then you come across that turn of phrase or that quote or passage that just sort of speaks to you. This week, I came across such a passage in an email from a web community called FaithVillage that was telling its members that it was having to close its doors because things had not worked out. To be truthful, I remember signing up for Faith Village, but I never really made it one of those sites I visit, even sporadically. Now it's closing, but the founder and senior editor, Brad Russell, said the following to site members:

"Our FaithVillage journey has not been about media or technology as an end in itself, but rather about applying the latest technology to fulfill perennial ministry goals, to share compelling faith stories, to build community, to disciple and form faith, to disseminate art and ideas, to sharpen leadership skills, to build collaborations that advance Kingdom causes."

In a world with declining church attendance and institutional loyalty, myriad distractions from what's truly important and cultural change that is exponentially faster than before, the church is challenged to engage people every day and not passively wait for the world to enter the church door.

All around us, religious institutions are challenged to respond to this dramatically changing world. Some are courageous; others are timid. Our technology was our courageous response. We will always be grateful for those who caught the vision and joined us.

I've long appreciated the wisdom of Eric Hoffer, who wrote: "In a world of change, the learners shall inherit the earth, while the learned shall find themselves perfectly suited for a world that no longer exists."

The only way to learn is to innovate. And as Peter Drucker says, "If you want something new, you have to stop doing something old."

But we can't be romantic about innovation. In the end, our most courageous efforts are subject to funding, timing, misperceptions, incorrect assumptions and a myriad other forces. As it's oft said, if innovation were easy, everyone would do it."

These words spoke to me because I think they speak to our current situation as a church. I sometimes think that we are the learned who are about to find ourselves "...perfectly suited for a world that no longer exists." That is one reason that I have begun a major push into social media in these now waning summer months. I think that as a church and denomination, we are on the brink of extinction because we fail to take advantage of the opportunities that exist right in front of us. I know that many of you do not engage in most of these social venues that I have been promoting. But there is a vast community around us that does. To paraphrase Drucker, "If we want something new to happen in our church, then perhaps we are going to have to change or stop some of the old ways we are doing things."

Please share your thoughts with me on this issue.



A Look at Upcoming Events

Brief Meeting to Discuss Final Preparations for Community Party and Homecoming

We will meet briefly after church to make final plans for the upcoming weekend and its festivities. We will gather in the Wicker Room and anyone that is interested in what will be happening next weekend is encouraged to attend.

Summit on Children and Youth This Afternoon

I am calling together all interested parties that would gather this afternoon at 4:00 p.m. to discuss the matter of our church and her ministry to the children and youth of our church and community. We are at a crossroads, and I feel that it is vital that we get together, develop a plan, select leaders, assign tasks and get about doing the ministry that the church is called to do—namely minister the love of Christ to our children and youth. If this is something that is on your heart then you need to be present at this meeting. If not, then you need to be praying for this meeting.

Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee To Meet

It is time for our Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee to meet. The meeting has been scheduled for Monday night August 25th at 7:00 p.m. We will meet in the Wicker Room. Members of the committee are: Nancy Toney, Chairperson; Martha Spurlock, Church Lay Leader; Pat Bowden, Member to Annual Conference; Dell Williams, Barbara Hargrove, Skip Skinner, Rob Moore, Dianne Botts, Jackie Mainous, Donnie Ratliff, Angie Clendenon.

Community Block Party

Sat Aug 30th : 4:00-8:00 p.m.

Please bring canned drinks to church by Friday night.
Please bring lettuce and tomatoes to church on Saturday.
In the event of rain, we will move inside.
United Methodist Men grilling Hamburgers and Hot Dogs

Homecoming

Sunday Aug 31st—Jeff Wright, Preacher

This is a potluck meal. The church is not supplying any food.
Please bring extra items. We hope to have a large attendance.
United Methodist Women overseeing the meal set up.

Welcome



Let me tell you how glad we are to have you at our worship service today. We hope that you will encounter the presence of the risen Christ. Please feel free to join in any of the activities or events that you see mentioned. Please come back and worship with us again!

The Pastor's Ponderings is a weekly publication of Rev. Terry Goodman. It contains thoughts, ideas, articles, and other writings designed to inform and, hopefully, cause you to stop and ponder.

The Romans 12 Project

Led By a Vision

Nestled between Huntsville, Alabama, to its north and the Tennessee River to its south, Latham United Methodist Church has seen its community grow from acres of farmland to a bustling suburban neighborhood. As the congregation clarified its mission and purpose the following vision emerged, "Connecting generations to grow relationships with God, others, and creation." This is a vision that moves the church into the future and draws upon its agricultural heritage.

This vision has led the church to establish a weekend nutrition program for children at a local elementary school, create a network that partners experienced gardeners with novices to teach gardening skills and encourage people to grow their own food, and develop a community garden in partnership with a Presbyterian church.

This past summer Latham UMC hosted its first farmers' market. The market's volunteer manager, Jane Smith, says the market not only provides a way for small, local farmers to make a sustainable living but has educated the community on the importance of healthy eating, and it has positioned the church as a social hub of the neighborhood.

On Tuesday afternoons the parking lot blossoms with tables of fresh produce, live music, crafts and other children's activities, cooking demonstrations, and lots of fellowship. At the end of the day extra produce is collected and donated to Manna House, a local inner city food distribution ministry.

An appreciation dinner was held at the end of the season with the farming families as the guests of honor. The church began this ministry to serve others, but it has received the blessing of relationship with the farming families (some of whom drive over an hour to participate) and with the surrounding neighborhood. Jane says, "We just fell in love with them. We can't wait until next year!"

Questions for Discussion

- If you asked the ministry areas in your congregation to describe how their ministry related to the congregation's vision, how do you think they would respond?
- In what ways are you being good stewards of God's creation, promoting a connection between faith and care of the earth's resources?

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Financial Snapshot

The Administrative Board thinks that it is important that we give you a weekly Financial Snapshot. Here are some figures to ponder:

Total Received Maintenance:\$ 13,692

Maintenance Goal:\$ 15,000

Money Given to General Fund

Budgeted Need to Date\$ 108,497

Actual Amount Given to Date.....\$ 98,081

The Pastor's Thoughts on Discipleship

Some wonder, "Why are we having a Community Party when we are having financial issues?" Let me try to answer that question.

First of all, the Community Party will cost our church probably much less than \$100. The gift card given away was supplied by individuals that contributed to its purchase. Most of this cost will be in consumables like ice, popcorn, etc. The hamburgers, hot dogs, chili, cookies, chips, onions, and pickles graciously supplied by Alpha Natural Resources. The hot dog and hamburger buns have been supplied by Food City. Members are supplying the drinks, lettuce, and tomatoes. That's the financial aspect of the event.

Let's look at the outreach aspect of the event. Last year, we had 175 in attendance. This year our goal is 225-250. People will come to our campus, many of them will stay the entire four hours. They will hear good Christian music. They will be fed. They will have an opportunity to talk with the members of the church that are in the crowd. Those members — YOU — will hopefully have very nice things to say about the church and its ministries. YOU will invite our guests to come and join us some Sunday for worship. Don't forget HOMECOMING is the NEXT day. We will do everything in our power to show hospitality and Christ's love to each and every person in attendance.

Now, if we calculate the \$100 cost divided by the possible 250 people that might attend, it averages out to 40 cents. I cannot mail a letter for that cost. So, we reach a good number of people at a very reasonable cost and we spread God's love in the process. Our church gets some great word of mouth in the community. God's word is proclaimed through music and song. Hungry bellies are fed.

Back to the original question, "Why are we having a Community Party when we are having financial issues?" My answer: "We can't afford not to have the party."

