



From the Pastor's Desk

Here are the questions that we need to be asking ourselves as we begin the New Year. How do we best reach our community for Jesus? How do we best impact our neighborhoods with the love of Christ so that others may know and share what we have found? How do we share the story of changed lives with those whose lives desperately want change? How do I know I am making a difference and know I am helping the Kingdom to grow?

These are age old questions, questions that have been asked by generation after generation within the church since the time Christ walked the streets of Galilee and Jerusalem. In attempts to answer these questions for our time I am suggesting the restructuring of the committees and administration of the church, a revamping of the Administrative Board and Council of Ministries into a Church Council and Ministry Teams. (This will be addressed and voted on at the January Administrative Board meeting.)

You see, I feel as United Methodists, in conjunction with The Book of Discipline and the four year vision proposal of Bishop Timothy Whitaker "Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World" (this theme was developed by the Council of Bishops and introduced at the 2008 General Conference) a restructuring needs to be put into place and the formulation of a strategy to reach our community for Jesus' needs to be established.

To do this I suggest the formation of a Leadership Team reformulating the Administrative Board and the Council of Ministries to a Church Council and Ministry Teams, these being a more viable form of church ministry and administration. This will also be in keeping with The Book of Discipline – 2004, paragraph 252.5.

The intent is to get the right people into the right positions for the right reasons so that we get the right results, and more importantly, God is glorified and individuals don't get burned out from being over worked or extended. This will also allow individuals to serve in positions with regard to where God has gifted them, not where we as a church say that they can or cannot serve. This will allow people to stay or leave ministry positions without a sense or feeling of guilt.

As I see it, we will be utilizing and focusing on five Church Ministry Teams and Purposes adapted from Rick Warren's "The Purpose Driven Church," Bishop Robert Schnase's "Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations" and Dan Southerland's "Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Change" (see below for further details). These ministry teams and purposes deal with the four ministry areas listed in The Book of Discipline and a fifth that I have added. The fifth area added is the ministry team of Worship. The other four teams are Evangelism, Ministry (outreach or missions), Fellowship and Discipleship. A sixth area or practice, taken from Bishop Schnase, is "Extravagant Generosity" and will be incorporated in the administrative area of the Church Council.

Ministry Teams

Let me share with you a brief synopsis of what and how these ministry teams will work.

1. **PASSIONATE WORSHIP** – In the area of Passionate Worship, our purpose is to magnify and exalt God more completely through our worship and prayer life both individually and corporately, as we strive to love God more with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.

Mark 12:28-30 states “²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” ²⁹ “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’”

We will be doing this by continuing to make our worship services unique and relevant to those in attendance, with the future formation and assistance of a 'Creative Team'. We will, when necessary, change the context of the worship service but not the content as God will always be the primary focus. This adds stimulation to our lives, often when we need it the most, so that we may remember and share God's faithfulness.

2. EVANGELISM – In the area of Evangelism, our purpose is to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with all so that lives may be changed and God's family and Kingdom be expanded. All includes the lost (those who have never heard the Gospel), the once churchd and the over churchd.

Matthew records Jesus' final words in Matthew 28:18-20. We read “¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

This is the Great Commission. It is not the Great Option. Bill Hybels, Senior Pastor at Willow Creek Community Church puts it this way. “You can't lock eyes with anyone who does not matter to God.” And, taking that a step further, if people matter to God, which I believe they do, then they better matter to us. It is here that we remember the significance of each individual and that everyone, whoever they may be, are infinitely loved by God.

3. SALTY SERVICE OR MINISTRY – In the area of Ministry (outreach or missions), our purpose is to serve others, outside of our church, in the Name of God. Our task is to equip laypersons for this work of ministry. We will need to provide leadership and training so that we, as God's ministers, lay and clergy alike, serve with passion, all in the name of Christ, where He has gifted us to do so. This will require an understanding and learning of what our passions and Spiritual Gifts are so that they may be embraced realizing that service in the name of Jesus is for a lifetime.

Paul writes in Ephesians 4:11-13 these words. “¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

4. RADICAL HOSPITALITY OR FELLOWSHIP – In the area of Radical Hospitality or Fellowship, we will continue to provide more and more opportunities for the formation of relationships where individuals will be accepted as they are and supported in their needs within our church family. Our purpose is to provide fellowship and in doing so, provide encouragement through small groups so that we may encourage and support one another.

Luke tells us in Acts 2:43-45 that “⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.”

5. INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP OR FAITH DEVELOPMENT – In the area of Intentional Discipleship or Faith Development, we will provide additional opportunities to strengthen our Christian maturity through Bible studies, such as Pastor's Bible Study and Disciple Bible Study. Other studies such as Alpha, Experiencing God and Contagious Christians, prayer studies, topical studies, accountability and small groups can and will be utilized.

Again Luke tells us in Acts 2:42 that “⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

All of these areas will continue to be under girded with prayer. And as such our ministry goals are as follows:

Goals of the Ministry Teams

1. **PASSIONATE WORSHIP:** To magnify and exalt God more completely through our worship and prayer life both individually and corporately, as we strive more to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. (Mark 12:28-30)

Our purpose here is worship and our task is to exalt God and magnifying His name. This adds stimulation to our lives often when we need it most.

2. **EVANGELISM:** To share the Good News of Jesus Christ with all, so that lives may be changed and God’s family and Kingdom be expanded (Matthew 28:18-20).

Our purpose here is outreach and our task is to evangelize our community. This adds significance to our lives.

3. **SALTY SERVICE MINISTRY:** To provide leadership and training so that we, as God’s ministers, lay and clergy alike, serve with passion, all in the name of Christ, where He has gifted us to do so (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Our purpose here is service and our task is to equip the saints for the work of ministry. This affirms our self-expression.

4. **RADICAL HOSPITALITY OR FELLOWSHIP:** To provide increased opportunities for the formation of relationships through small groups and other fellowship opportunities so that we may encourage and support one another (Acts 2:43-45).

Our purpose here is fellowship and our task is to encourage and to support one another. This adds support for our lives not only in times of blessing but also during times of trial.

5. **INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP OR FAITH DEVELOPMENT:** To provide opportunities to strengthen our Christian maturity through increased Bible studies, prayer ministries, small groups and Christian accountability (Acts 2:42).

Our purpose here is Discipleship and our task is to edify and build up ourselves in Christian maturity. This adds stability to our lives.

As you can guess, this incorporated with our Vision Statement will be a huge undertaking. But we need to remember that First United Methodist Church of Boynton Beach is God’s Church. And if we seek after God first and His righteousness all these things will be added unto us. I hope you are as excited as I am about the possibilities that lie before us.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Rich