

REACHING NEW PEOPLE

Shandon United Church, Columbia, SC, February 26-27, 2016

Attendees: Ben Herlong, Bill Click, Harry Gibson, Steve Nyberg, Kathy Jo Long, Al Quarles

1) 1955 vs. Present Day

In 1955, new membership was tied to culture and community. "Build it and they will come". Today, 80% of churches are experiencing declining membership, but **20% are thriving**. The old method of increasing membership does not work. In 2007, 21.3% of the population in S.C. attend church on any given weekend, but attended on average, 1.9 times per month.

Sings of declining congregation: 1) Living in the past; 2) Preoccupied with buildings and land (maintaining); 3) Exhausted members (too many responsibilities); 4) Inward focus; 5) Mission emphasis on how to survive.

Congregations experiencing numerical decline experience a sense of loss, which lead to the emotion of grief. Stages of **grief**: 1) Denial; 2) Anger; 3) Bargaining; 4) Depression; and 5) **Acceptance**

2) Ways to reintroduce the church to the community

The church's Mission remains the same, but methods change. **Relocate** most meetings off-site, with exposure in the community. Exposure opportunities: Elections; Car washes; Caroling; Tents at community events and Festivals (Come See Me, Yorkfest, Christmasville), Tournaments (soccer, softball, velodrome), Rock Hill Summer events downtown, etc.

3) Time reallocation for pastor to reach new people

Commit time for Pastor to "be in the community" and out of the office for networking and exposure. Pastor's "alone" time already in place. Coordination of meetings to increase pastor's efficiency in participation. Member care (goal 20% Pastor, 80% Laity) already in place and in prime position to continue and possibly expand with personal contacts (note cards, phone team).

4) Developing a culture of invitation in the congregation

Missions are opportunities for members to serve, but are not effective in bringing in new members. **Website:** Current and relevant website, available to public. 83% come to church because someone invited them. 65% of unchurched would visit if asked. 75% of unchurched never asked. Only 2% of church member ever invite someone to church. "**Elbow Activities**" hobbies like golf, disc golf, book club, teaching, eating, walking, sporting events, quilting, card game night. Way to build relationships prior to inviting to church: away from church; small group of members invite non-member/unchurched to participate in activities; multiple events.

5) Introduce the "Coaching Cluster" and answer questions

Process: 1) Develop church-specific Action Plan; 2) Monthly calls with Coach (alternating between Pastor and Focus Team; 3) contact with coach 24/7 via email and text; 4) Six-month interval face-to-face meetings with Coach and Pastor/Focus Team. **Cost:** \$1,500/year.