



The Grapevine

CONNECTING THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF DETROIT

February 2011

Is Your Church a Lifesaving Station?



by the Rev. Dr.
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Recently at a day held by the Planning and Visioning Ministry Team for clergy, I told the Parable of the Life-saving Station by Cynthia and Theodore Wedel. This parable served as the vision for the church I served in Bethlehem, PA, whose slogan was "More Members More Like Christ." The vision was to follow Christ's call to "go therefore and make disciples" and to help them grow into Christ-likeness. We took this parable seriously.

"On a dangerous sea coast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude little life-saving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea, and with no thought for themselves, went out day and night tirelessly searching for the lost. Some of those who were saved and various others in the surrounding area wanted to become associated with the station and gave of their time and money and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought and new crews trained. The little life-saving station grew. "Some of the members of the life-saving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a

more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. They replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building. Now the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they decorated it beautifully because they used it as a sort of club. Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on life-saving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do this work. The life-saving motif still prevailed in the club's decorations, and there was a liturgical life-boat in the room where the club's initiations were held. About this time a large ship wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boat loads of cold, wet and half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick. The beautiful new club was in chaos. So the property committee immediately had a shower house build outside the club where victims of shipwrecks could be cleaned up before coming inside. "At the next meeting, there was a split among the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted upon life-saving as their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a life-saving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save lives of all the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they

could begin their own life-saving station. So they did.

"As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It evolved into a club, and yet another life-saving station was founded. History continued to repeat itself, and if you visit that sea coast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown"

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The question I asked the clergy was – is your church a lifesaving station that seeks to be a beacon for Jesus Christ? Or is it a clubhouse that gathers merely to be together as a club? On clergy day over 60 clergy and candidates gathered to hear from the clergy and one candidate from seven of the fifteen churches that grew in worship attendance during the previous year as they shared their congregation's story. It is the hope of the Planning and Visioning Ministry Team, and their Emergency Task Force, to continue to awaken the vision of Christ for each congregation to be a lifesaving station, that casts the beacon of Christ's light, set on a hill, so that neighbors far and wide will "see their good works, and give glory to their father who is in heaven" (Matt 5:13). I want to thank all the clergy who came to this event, and pray that together, we will reach more disciples and show them how to show mercy, to do justice, and to walk humbly with our God.

All Presbytery Worship Service in pictures
 Friday, February 4, 2011
 At The First Presbyterian Church, Dearborn



Presbytery of Detroit Mass Choir
 All Presbytery Worship Service
 February 4, 2011



Clergy Ordination Anniversaries

CORSO, LINDA	10
FOSTER, JOHN	40

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THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

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Does a Congregation's Location Influence Its Effectiveness?

An old business adage cites three essentials for success: Location, Location, Location!

Can the location of its building prevent a church from accomplishing effective ministries?

Yes and no. Location is *something* in congregations—especially in some circumstances, such as (a) when choosing where to build a new church on the edge of a growing city and (b) when a older downtown church is parking starved, land-locked, and unable to purchase adjacent property for parking. But in the vast majority of congregations, location means *almost nothing!*

- First Presbyterian Church, Osawatomie, Kansas (population 4,488) describes itself as “An unlikely place with a refreshing Spirit.” What makes its location an unlikely place? A church leader answers, “An outsider might see a small town riddled with poverty. But we see people we know living in every home. We do big things here for a small place.” The church’s big vision is to be part of and serve the entire community.

- Fifty miles north in Lenexa, Kansas (population 46,822) the Kaw Prairie Community Church ministers in a growing suburb of Kansas City. When building their new church, leaders carefully considered its physical design and chose to go in the direction of a community, or public, facility. Adults use the church’s gym daily. In its Playland (a children’s indoor play area), parents can spend time with their children. Situated next to Playland, a coffee shop—equipped with Wi-Fi for laptop-computer-convenient Internet access—gives community residents a place to meet. With a clear dream for the future, the Kaw Prairie Church holds two Sunday morning services that offer “contemporary worship with ancient echoes.”

- Albany, Georgia (population 76,574) lies 200 miles south of Atlanta and claims a rich history, including the birthplace of singer Ray Charles. The community’s religious leaders unite to address high rates of poverty, infant mortality, and community violence. Yet, Albany is also home to Sherwood Baptist Church and its outreach ministry—Sherwood Pictures, a successful producer of Christian films.

On the surface, these three church settings seem to have nothing in common. But each church has identified ways to do effective ministry in its location. The vitality of each congregation busts the myth that location determines church health and numerical growth.

Yes, the ministry strengths of effective congregations vary by community type. The distinctive strengths of rural churches differ from those of effective churches in stable suburbs. But regardless of location, effective ministry happens everywhere! *Church research across the United States shows that healthy congregations find creative ways to fit their mission and outreach with their community’s population profile.*¹

While there are dozens of ways to describe community type, the five location categories listed below illustrate how effective churches match mission and place.

Finding Strength in Rural Communities. This locality includes non-urban places, such as small towns and rural areas—like Osawatomie, Kansas. With low population density and low mobility (few people move in or out of the community), unemployment tends to be low as well. The percentage of people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine is smaller than in other community types. Most of the younger people tend to move away after graduating from high school. (About one in four U.S. congregations is located in this community type.)



"This looks like the perfect location for us!"

Churches in small towns and rural areas tend to do particularly well in promoting members' spiritual growth, providing meaningful worship services, and building a strong sense of belonging among their participants. *In rural communities, the most effective churches excel at caring for children and youth and empowering their worshipers to use their talents.*

Finding Strength in Growing Suburban Communities. This second community type contains large percentages of traditional families—married couples with children living at home. Many of the adults are well educated and are employed as professionals. People between thirty and sixty-four are the biggest age group. (About one in five U.S. churches—like the Kaw Prairie Community Church—is located in this type of growing community.)

Churches in growing suburbs often excel in caring for children and youth. They also stand out in another way—many of their members are involved in the community in multiple ways. Area population growth enables churches to welcome larger percentages of new worshipers, too.

However, most churches in growing population communities face other challenges—such as (a) finding ways to involve worshipers in activities beyond just attending worship, (b) fostering feelings of belonging, and (c) facilitating personal spiritual growth. *The most effective suburban churches excel at these ministries.*

Finding Strength in Small Cities and Stable Suburban Communities. In these locations, population growth is almost nonexistent, and few new homes were built recently. People over the age of sixty-five are more likely to claim this community type as home, but few minorities or immigrants live here. (One in four U.S. congregations is located in a small city or stable suburb.)

With many older worshipers beyond child-rearing years, churches find experienced volunteers who want to contribute to their community. Some congregations continue to nurture children and youth through their programming. But churches here may find it more difficult to involve members in small groups and other church activities, foster spiritual growth, and engage lay leaders' gifts in the church's mission. *Effective churches in such communities excel in these ministries.*

Finding Strength in Economically Distressed Urban Communities. Albany, Georgia, is like other urban places: high rates of unemployment, poverty, and numerous female-headed households. Despite low population growth, many children live in these distressed urban settings. Also, many racial-ethnic minorities reside in these economically challenged environments. (One in five U.S. churches is in an economically distressed urban community.)

With low population growth, these urban churches can struggle to attract new worshipers. *Effective churches in these communities tend to excel in (a) providing meaningful worship experiences, (b) motivating members to share their faith with others, and (c) giving attendees the feeling that their church values their talents.*

Finding Strength in High-Mobility Urban Communities. The largest population group in areas of high mobility tends to be well-educated singles, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine. Most residents are renters and few of them have children. (The fewest U.S. churches are located in these settings—only one in ten.)

Research indicates that high-mobility urban environments present the greatest challenges for congregations. The strength that most consistently emerges in effective churches in these communities: More worshipers are more involved in their city's life than are worshipers in the other community types. *Effective churches use this strength to leverage greater vitality in other areas, such as spiritual growth and congregational participation.*

Finding Strength in Any Location: Church as a Neighborhood Destination. In his excellent book *The Great Good Place*, Ray Oldenburg argues that in the past, three gathering places existed in every community—home, workplace, and the neighborhood hangout (such as the coffee shops or barbershops).² These three places anchored the community, keeping the collective spirit and individual identities of residents afloat.

Oldenburg says that many communities now lack a third place—spots where people gather to share their lives, talk about their values, and get their social and spiritual needs met.

He believes that congregations are uniquely positioned to be their community's third place. However, becoming a "public congregation" that is a neutral "third place" requires intentional strategies.

The following questions help to develop an intentional "third place" strategy: What community type best describes our church's location? Do our current ministry goals fit our community? What changes would our church need to consider so that non-members feel like welcome guests who can relax and be themselves in this setting? What are the pros and cons of having local residents see our church as a neighborhood place rather than a place only for "church people?"

The Bottom line. Former President Jimmy Carter boasted that he could hammer a nail into a board with three hits. The trick, he said, is "try to hit it where it's going to go."

By responding to community change and matching their ministries to present-day needs, effective church leaders focus their ministry in ways that "hit the nail on the head."

¹ Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *Places of Promise: Finding Strength in Your Congregation's Location* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

² Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place* (New York: Marlowe & Company, 1999 Edition).

Presbytery of Detroit Calendar of Events

To have your Churches event posted please send the information to sandy@detroitpresbytery.org.

February 2011	
25-26	Presbyterian Men's Annual Retreat "Effective Leadership in the Light of Christ" led by the Rev. Stu Ritter at Northville, First. Click here for flyer
26	<i>I Believe You</i> documentary on Domestic Violence to air on WXYZ channel 7 at 3:00 pm
26	Birmingham First Rejoicing Spirits Service 5:00 pm Click here for flyer
27	Birmingham, First Concert series with John Repulski at 3:00 pm in the sanctuary. Click here for flyer
March 2011	
1	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at Dearborn, Littlefield
2	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
3	Pre- Retirement Seminar for clergy contemplating retirement within the next five years. Click here for flyer
5	Mission Workshop 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. Click here for more information
6	Farmington, First holding a Mardi Gras Jazz Concert. Click here for information
8	Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care meeting at Birmingham, First 1669 W. Maple Rd at 7:00 pm
10	World Medical Relief 9:00 am - 1:00 pm Hands on Mission volunteer opportunity Click Here for more information
12	Presbyterian Women's Annual Retreat Farmington, First 8:30 am - 3:15 pm. Click here for brochure
13	Daylight Savings Time Begins - set clocks ahead one hour
15-17	Spring in the D for Mid and Sr High and College students Click here for flyer
16	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
19	Garden City Presbyterian Church 1841 Middlebelt Rd. (1 block South of Ford Rd.), Garden City 48135 Saturday Night Light free admission concert <i>William Reynolds Band</i>
25-26	H...E...L...P...Retreat sponsored by the Church Education & Faith Development Work Group. Click here for more info
26	Birmingham First Rejoicing Spirits Service 5:00 pm Click here for flyer
27	Birmingham, First Concert series with R. Monty Bennett at 3:00 pm in the sanctuary. Click here for flyer
31-April 3	The 16th Michigan Presbyterian Pilgrimage will be held at the Howell Conference and Nature Center. Click here for Guest and Team Registration forms.
April 2011	
5	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at Dearborn, Littlefield
5-7	Spring in the D for Mid and Sr High and College students Click here for flyer
6	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
7-9	Social Justice & Peacemaking invites everyone to a national PC(USA) Peacemaking Convocation at Stony Pointe Center, NY. More information is available at www.presbypeacefellowship.org/convocation2011
9-10	Ann Arbor, First will be having Diana Butler Bass as a guest speaker. More info to follow.
9-17	Hands on Mission Katrina Trip Olive Tree, LA Click here for more information
9-17	Hands on Mission Texas Trip Texas City, TX Click here for more information
10-16	Hands on Mission Iowa Trip Cedar Rapids, IA Click here for more information
15	Deadline for submitting Ranney-Balch Grant requests to the Metropolitan Urban Ministry Team Click here for Ranney-Balch Grant application
16	Birmingham, First hosting Mark Yaconelli. Click here for flyer
19-21	Spring in the D for Mid and Sr High and College students Click here for flyer
20	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
23	Birmingham First Rejoicing Spirits Service 5:00 pm Click here for flyer

26	Presbytery Meeting at Grosse Ile, 7925 Horsemill Rd., Grosse Ile 48138; 734-676-8811
May 2011	
3	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at Dearborn, Littlefield
4	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
5-7	Transformation/Small Church Ministry Conference in Perrysburg, OH. Click here for flyer
10	Faith Communities Coalition on Foster Care meeting at Birmingham, First 1669 W. Maple Rd at 7:00 pm
13-15	Camp Westminster on Higgins Lake is having a Spring Wake-up weekend for the camp. Click here for flyer
18	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
22	Birmingham, First Organ & Orchestra Concert at 3:00 pm in the sanctuary. Click here for flyer
30	Presbytery Office Closed Memorial Day
June 2011	
1	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
7	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at Dearborn, Littlefield
15	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
19-24	Youth Mission Blast in Detroit week 1 Click here for flyer
28	Presbytery Meeting at Detroit, St. John's, 1961 E Lafayette, Detroit 48207; 313-567-0213
July 2011	
4	Presbytery Office Closed for Independence Day
5	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at Dearborn, Littlefield
6	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
17-22	Youth Mission Blast in Detroit week 2 Click here for flyer
18-23	Festivals of Health Mobile Health Fairs at various locations. Click here for more information
20	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
August 2011	
1-8	Youth Mission Trip to Houma, LA RSVP by March 15 Click here for flyer
2	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at Dearborn, Littlefield
3	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
17	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
23	Presbytery Meeting at Beverly Hills, Northbrook, 22055 W. Fourteen Mile Rd., Beverly Hills 48025; 248-642-0200
September 2011	
5	Presbytery Office Closed Labor Day
6	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at Dearborn, Littlefield
7	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
21	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
October 2011	
4	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at Dearborn, Littlefield
5	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
15	1st Annual Jr High Youth Rally held at Howell Conference and Nature Center 10:00 am - 4:00 pm. Click here for flyer
19	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
25	Presbytery Meeting at Ann Arbor, Westminster, 1500 Scio Church Rd., Ann Arbor 48103; 734-761-9320

November 2011	
1	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at Dearborn, Littlefield
2	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
6	Daylight Savings Time Ends - set clocks back one hour
16	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
22	Presbytery Meeting at Royal Oak, First, 529 Hendrie Blvd., Royal Oak 48067; 248-541-0108
24	Presbytery Office Closed Thanksgiving
December 2011	
6	Taizé Worship 7:00 pm at Dearborn, Littlefield
7	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
10	Men's Advent Communion Breakfast
21	Taizé Worship 6:30 pm at Bloomfield Hills, Kirk in the Hills
22-26	Presbytery Office Closed Christmas Holiday
29-Jan 2	Presbytery Office Closed New Year Holiday