

**Eight Ways to Revive the
Church, Part 1:
Facing Reality with Boldness**

SW WA Synod. ELCA

May 14, 2010

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My Suppositions

- # Liberals are do-gooders who burn out, because they've lost their mojo.
- # Evangelicals have the spirit, but sustain it by placing 'others' outside the pale.
- # The new atheists despise religious types, both liberals and conservatives, but what do atheists do for others?

My Simple Solution

- # Live into the joyous, abundant spirit of God, tasting the 'living water' that never runs out, and serving others.
- # Love your own tradition with all your heart, mind and soul—without having to condemn other traditions.

My Simple Solution

- # Love your tradition and share the good news—
- # Jesus the way, the truth and life, because it is good news—and it is true.



Tough Trends

- Liberals and Mainline Protestants:
 - Lost 30/40 percent of its members over 50 years
 - In Protestants have decreased in the overall share of Americans, 63 percent to a little over 50 percent

Reason for Trend

- **Reasons for decline:**
 - # Evangelicals out-reproduce liberals by 2 to 1
 - # Liberals/mainline do not keep their children in church
 - # Transfers from evangelical to liberal church, dropped from 21 percent to 9 percent in last decade

Liberals Defined: Tolerance

- Jesus: Model of inclusiveness
- Radical hospitality to the outsider
- Faith justified by reason alone....
- Advocates for rights of homosexuals
- Social justice—common good, particularly around homelessness

Evangelicals Defined: Passion

- Emphasize conversion to Jesus Christ
- Scripture: Sole authority for belief and action
- Do informal acts of social service
- Belief in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross as atonement for sin
- Worship services filled with joy!

PNW Context: Isolation

- White, 83 percent, nation 75 percent
- More educated
- Higher median income; slightly less poverty
- Population density per square mile: 14 to 80 for US!!!!!!!
- High influx of immigrants, WA: 8th; OR: 10th

PNW Peculiar People

- Few Family ties/networks
- Isolation, exhilaration of new beginning
- Anti-institutional, into outdoor recreation
- Independent, entrepreneurial, libertarian

63 percent not religiously affiliated

25 percent claim no religion

PNW Ethos: Liberals RETREAT

- Shorter and earlier worship services
- Fewer demands on lay leaders
- Emphasis on a rational basis for faith
- Progressive focus theologically, focus on social justice and gay rights in particular

PNW Ethos: Evangelicals REJOICE:

- Create facilities that rival public community centers
- Develop their own family activities, sport's groups, and groups of all kinds
- Evangelicals rejoice in the fact that people in the Northwest have few church affiliations

Liberal Churches in My Study

- Averaged 280 attendance
- Most budgets around \$500k; gave 10 percent; most were intentionally inclusive of gay and lesbians—1/3, 1/5 if congregations
- Two of 10 pastors female

Evangelical Churches in My Study

- # Four megachurches from Wa and Or
- # 9/24 churches started in last 10 years;
8/24 were charismatic/Pentecostal
- # Median growth rates: 90 percent over
5 years
- # Median budget 2 million; 13 percent
giving
- # Each church, 30 to 40 part time/full
time missionaries

Why even do religion?

- # People want to socially enact a desire for what they consider ultimate
- # People want to feel a part of something bigger than themselves



What do Religion?

Religious Faith Empowers American Reform

- # Abolition, women's rights, civil rights...
- # Religious, whether liberal or conservative do most of volunteering or financial giving in U.S.
- # Robert Putnam—Harvard Prof:
 - # U.S. Religious Organizations provide ½ of all social capital

Why do Christianity?

Yes, we ALL have made mistakes, repent, learn, and move on!!!

Christ's kingdom:

All are equal—domination-free space

All deserve love and justice

Jesus is always with us—empowered in love and justice

Eight Ways to Revitalize Church: **Modest but bold**

Epistemologically modest,
but BOLD in
truth, beauty,
and goodness of your faith



Eight Ways to Revitalize Church:

Share spiritual life

Spiritual experience is NOT RARE

People are transformed by it

Why not share it?????

Eight Ways to Revitalize Church:

Convert Your Kids!

If you love your kids share with them what is true!!!

Jesus said:

“I have come to bring life, and life abundant!!!!”



Eight Ways to Revitalize Church:

Be kid-centric

Jesus said:

“Bring the young ones to me, to them belongs the kingdom.”

Build gyms for kids

Pay your youth director more than the Sr. Minister!!!

Eight Ways to Revitalize Church: **Be Family-centric**

WITHOUT BEING A BIGOT:

- # We are called to have kids, fill the earth;

- # Children are of the kingdom

- # But... Jesus was ambivalent about family!

- # Down right anti-reproductive—be careful of idolizing the family...

Eight Ways to Revitalize Church:

Start Small Groups

The Purpose Driven Life (2002) by Rick Warren

Small group process

—premised on a non-judgmental though morally accountable process of trust and nurture. The leader (facilitates) honest sharing of one's intimate life experience in a group setting that is “confidential” but open, morally accountable but “merciful,” accepting but ethically “encouraging,” fully-aware of “human frailty” but expecting the “best” from one another

Eight Ways to Revitalize Church:

Sin is in!

Calvinism is the NEW HIP TREND! So says, Time magazine.

Young people know that the world is pretty messed up.

TALK ABOUT IT, PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW HOW TO OVERCOME IT!



Eight Ways to Revitalize Church:

Boldly Ask

- # Too often, liberal churches, God is expected to do nothing...
- # and yet the Bible says God acts.
- # Ask for what you need....
- # Jesus, genius for asking and getting what he wanted....

Religiously Revived:

Live into the joyous,
abundant spirit of God,
tasting the 'living water'
that never runs out, and
serving others

