

Minister's Update

Dear Church:

The Church in North America and globally faces unprecedented challenges. We are facing the highest rates of religious dis-affiliation in years. We are witnessing the closing of churches, the shrinking of denominations, and the lowest rates of worship attendance in generations. According to Pew research 40% of Washingtonians are religiously unaffiliated. Less than 1% of Washingtonians are Congregationalists both UCC and other Congregationalists denominations such as the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. We are in a post-Christian era. While, there are challenges facing the Church. It is also a time of great opportunity. Tod Bolsinger, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in Los Angeles, in his book *Canoeing the Mountains*, likens the situation of the Church today to the situation faced by Lewis & Clark when travelling west who unexpectedly faced the Rocky Mountains. He states that churches have been excellent canoeist but now we face mountains that are unexpected. He writes, we must dig deep into our mission and core values, and we must experiment forward. As we face a new year I believe God is calling the Church and particularly Peoples Church to a renewed focus on being a witness within the world. As we walk into Vision 2020 there are a few ways that we can face the challenges together to be a renewed witness for Christ in the world.

1. Pray for the unity of the Church and for our city that we will be a witness to our community around us.
2. Invite someone (family, friends, neighbors) to join you for worship.
3. If you see a visitor welcome them to Peoples Church and invite them to come again.
4. Join Me and the Evangelism and Outreach committee for a visit to National Community Church (Barracks Row Campus) on Saturday, January 18th at 4:30pm as we visit their 5pm worship service to learn more about how churches in the city are reaching Baby Boomers, Millennials, and Generation Z.
5. Read books on Church Growth
 - a. "Canoeing the Mountains" by Tod Bolsinger
 - b. "Emotionally Healthy Church" by Peter Scazzero
 - c. "Christianity for the Rest of Us" by Diana Butler Bass
 - d. "Who Stole my Church" by Gordon McDonald
6. Visit church websites of successful churches to learn about what they've done to reach new generations.
 - a. First-Plymouth UCC (Lincoln, Nebraska)
 - b. First Corinthians Baptist Church (Harlem, NYC, NY)
 - c. Edenton Street UMC (Raleigh/NC)
 - d. Highland Park UMC (Dallas, TX)
 - e. Marble Collegiate (Reformed/UCC) (Manhattan, NY)
 - f. Alfred Street Baptist Church (Alexandria, VA)
 - g. National Community Church (Washington, DC)

Blessings,
Rev. Brandon Harris

December 2019