

What IS Pursuing Missional Faithfulness?

Over the past 10 years, you and I have thrown a lot of stuff on the wall. While that created the need for much mopping, in reality, some things/ideas/ventures stuck... thanks BE to the God of all Mercy; we have seen and done some great things together. Thanks to your generosity of spirit and soul and financial support, we've grown in many ways hard to measure.

To be sure, during recent years I'm less idealistic about who WE are *and* about how things work. I'm DIS-illusioned and that's a good thing. I'm sensing that the long-term viability of our church relates directly to our transitioning/changing/transforming our stance about what God wants us to BE and DO as His people living in Richmond, VA. Pursuing Missional Faithfulness asks the overarching question:

God, what do You want us to BE and DO?

In a recent church-wide discussion the question arose as the difference in "this" (PMF) and the 40 Days of Purpose. (During the past decade we have completed 40 Days of Purpose, 40 Days of Community, a self devised 40 Days of Prayer, along with several other packaged church-wide emphases.)

It's a good question because in each of our "40 Days" emphases we would get a short "lift" but minimal transformation. Over the past couple of years, my (our?) interest in getting a temporary "boost" has waned. In responding to the question of differences, I want to avoid being overly critical of our past activities (they were fine for their time) while at the same time giving a reasonable evaluation of lasting effects. Also, I think the question of differences is an attempt to get our minds around PMF by comparing it to something familiar.

So, from someone who hopes to *exchange DESINATION for JOURNEY*, here's a perspective on the differences between a "40 Days" approach and Pursuing Missional Faithfulness.

In some ways, it's like the difference between a sprint and a cross country marathon – note 40 days versus 450 days. There's also the element of pace: A "40 Days" approach provides a quick start comprehensive package of media promotional materials, Bible studies, text books, worship services, prayers, and sermons, complete with "fill in the blank" sheets. PMF begins slowly, seeks to build consensus and momentum based on prayer, creativity of Spirit and readiness of the heart.

A 40 days approach is "destination oriented." It seeks to establish specific outcomes and gives directions all along the way (here's what to do and here's what you'll get...) all of which sounds desirable but often leads to running ahead of the Spirit and short-circuiting the essential processes required for transformation.

In contrast, PMF is "journey oriented;" it's intentionally open-ended and initially feels "vague." PMF does not promote formulae, creeds, views of the Bible, worship styles, approaches to discipleship, church organizational structure, etc.

PMF seeks to tap into the passions and creativity of spiritually committed members who are given room and liberty to be on journey with each other and God. PMF provides a "direction" without specific directions.

40 Days has at the center a charismatic, successful, somewhat iconic personality who is experienced digitally through DVD and satellite connections. The primary approach is often a pragmatic: "here's how/why/ when, etc. you do this or that."

On the other hand, PMF leaders are neither famous nor experts; they come from within the faith community (pastoral staff along with the Leadership Journey Community.) The leaders seek to draw insights and inspiration from the text and into ourselves and member participants. So that, instead of *telling*: "Here's what the text (material) says," there is *asking*: "What does the text/Spirit/your heart say to you and how does that apply in the real world?" I hope that makes sense.

PMF also offers as a resource the insights of other pastors/leaders/coaches who walk *with* (not for) our ENTIRE congregation throughout the journey. Through prayer triplets and "cluster" gatherings with sister churches, cross-pollination occurs.

Again, our "Leadership Journey Community" includes the pastor and staff, but equally important, our real leaders... those "passionate and positive people" identified and affirmed by the church. It's a new term: they are called the "Leadership Journey Community." I'm tempted to call them our JCs (and, of course, THE-JC).

In PMF, the pastor seeks answers with the people rather than giving answers to the people. And, the pastor also must come to grips that Moses died on Mt. Nebo en-route to the Promised Land. Note that even after

crossing the Jordan River, the journey of the people of God continued... and it continues to this day, 3000 years later.

One additional analogy might help: The difference between a "40 Days/Revival" approach and PMF is similar to the difference between dieting and transforming to a whole new way of living (healthy lifestyle.) PMF is learning to BE a more healthy congregation (learning to eat, exercise, recreate, and function better.)

A diet is a targeted intervention seeking short term (and measurable) results. Diets may be helpful, but not always because they contribute to the illusion that losing 10, 20, 50 pounds is THE answer; it's much more complex. Diets seldom last long term unless a fundamental transformation occurs in the way one views the role of food in our lives.

Transformation to a healthy lifestyle is a long term commitment to the quality and quantity of one's whole being... body, soul, mind and spirit. It takes more time, focuses less on immediate results, and improves the quality (being and doing) and quantity of life (the journey extends.)

The decision to enter PMF was affirmed in January's business meeting. It's a 15 month process that depends totally on our fullest attention. We'll want to give priority in church-wide planning to the many events and engagements that will be led by the Leadership Journey Community.

Now that we've entered the path of PMF, which way do we go?

Immediately, we must begin identifying 15 of our most passionate, positive and committed people. In the worship services of February 7 and February 14, you will be asked to submit the names of 6 people who you believe could lead us.

You do not need their permission before submitting. You MAY include your own name. Prior to formal identification as a LJC member, each person will be fully briefed about the pathways before us.

Meanwhile, we are ALREADY on journey with God. Whether we're aware of it or not, each day is an awesome adventure, a hike toward the Holy, a pilgrimage of promise. Let us open our eyes and see God's marvelous works along the way.

See you Sunday! Pastor

Finding the Joy in Love

Our first Stewardship Committee meeting grew out of I Chronicles 21:24. In that verse King David says, "I will not take that which is thine for the Lord nor offer burnt offering without cost." We wanted to start from the example of King David's heart for God, because we understood that in today's economy each gift would come at a cost. We wanted to be reminded that when we see our gift as a reflection of our **Love for God**, just as King David did, then we see the cost as an expression of the joy of that love.

February is a good time to think on the Joy of Love - Love that compels us to give our best faithfully. Love that compels us to send our pledges even when snow, bitter cold rain and ill health, keep us away. Love that says I will not forget my gift. It will be there even when I may have to mail it because I cannot be there.

Many in our church family have experienced God's blessing in difficult times. Times when faced with medical expenses or other financial difficulties that we chose to write that first check to God. I have known a time of need in my life just like that and as Paul said also a time of plenty. There is truly nothing that I would trade for that experience of living by faith and trust in the hollow of His hand. Seeing first-hand how God provides is something that we never forget, something that changes us. The words of Paul still ring true in II Corinthians 9:6-8: (6) "But, this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. (7) Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver. (8) And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things may, abound to every good work." The chapter ends at verse 15, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Let's all strive this February, a month marked by Valentine's Day, a month that speaks so much of love, to experience the joy in our love for God.

Betty Loving Hofmann / Stewardship Committee

WEDNESDAY NIGHT FAMILY DINNERS

Join us for a wonderful meal and an evening full of activities for all ages. You can make a dinner reservation using the welcome card in the pew racks or you can call the church office. Please make or cancel your reservations by Noon on Tuesday. Cost is \$5.00 for main meal and \$3.00 for snack meal.

February 3 - Main: Baked chicken w/dressing, potatoes, carrots, rolls, dessert, tea/coffee. Snack: Chicken leg.
February 10 - Main: Barbecue w/sauce, baked beans, cole slaw, rolls, dessert, tea/coffee. Snack: Chicken fingers.

NEW ADDRESS

Rev. Dr. Gerald E. (Gerry) and Betty Robinson
7190 Bellspring Drive
Mechanicsville, VA 23111

Among Our Church Family

IN MEMORIAM
Mrs. Helen Simmons
Died January 17, 2010

SYMPATHY TO

Robert Simmons, in the death of his mother, Helen Simmons. Cards can be sent to Robert Simmons, P.O. 179, St Ingoes, MD 20684

The family of Cindy Burkman, who died January 17.

Linda Fox, in the death of her father, Rowland Daniel, Sr., on January 25, 2010.

HOSPITALIZED

Forest: Gladys Denzler, Richard Denzler's mother

HOME FROM THE HOSPITAL

Pat Smith, Betty Ragland's sister
Deidre Leigh (Dee Dee) Philippi
Ella Phillips, Alice Phillips' 3 year old granddaughter
Debbie Smith, Jim Haden's daughter

REHAB

Beaufont Healthcare: Janice Carlton
Westport Manor: Leslie "Duke" Miller, Room 201
Parham Health Rehab: Richard (Dick) Layne, Room 31
Glen Burnie: Vincent Albis, Room 107
Our Lady of Hope: Jenelle Davis
Crump Manor: Cathy Buchanan, Room C-3

CONGRATULATIONS

Jason and Ashley Blanchard are the proud parents of a baby girl, Lilly Gayle Blanchard, born January 19, 2010. Congratulations also to big brother Cooper. Grandparents are Jim & Belinda Blanchard and Rudolph Cox. Great-grandmother is Betty Blanchard; Aunts and uncles are Darin & Jenny Cox, and Kevin & Paula Cox. Great aunt and uncle: Ronnie and Patty Carroll.

THANK YOU NOTES RECEIVED FROM

Otis Duke Madeline Williams
The family of Stuart Wray Martin

HATCHER HEALTH NOTES....

Influenza is NOT going away and may increase in the next few weeks. H1N1 and Seasonal flu vaccine is still available from many sources and it is not too late to be vaccinated. If you are looking for information about the flu or how to care for someone with the flu, www.flu.gov, is a good web site. Both vaccines are being offered daily from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., with no appointment needed at IVNA, 5008 Monument Avenue. Cost is \$28.00 for the Seasonal vaccine and \$20 for H1N1, unless your insurance covers the cost.

Free Health Seminars at Lewis Ginter will be presented in February and March on various topics. They will be held at 5:30 p.m., in the Education and Library Complex. They will be presented by local physicians. A list of topics and dates are available on the Health Ministry table.

Blessings, Janice Lynn RN, Parish Nurse