

Bethany Lutheran Church
Council Report

1. Reported By: Pastor Ruth Ann
2. Organization: Clergy
3. Date: 8.24.10
4. Report Purpose and Scope:
Informational
5. Summary for Council:
 - * Mission trip to Tacoma, WA was a big success. Excellent students and adults. The youth made great connections between faith in action and humanity. This happened particularly through the food bank work. We had two different projects: one a food bank and the other a food distribution center for food banks. Thus they saw the people served and the process behind serving needy people. We were also delighted to help welcome baby Addison Dragseth upon our return!
 - * The intergenerational Sunday school was another success with about 30 people participating over the five weeks. For those whom VBS in June is not an option, they in particular voiced appreciation of the Sunday summer option. To see dads and moms dancing and praying with their children was the whole intent. Faith formation in action!
 - * Fellowship Team: led both the Wedding Sunday reception and on the same day a New member picnic for the last four new member classes. Kudos to them!
 - * Staff meetings: devotions are rotating between staff members. We are practicing what we preach in terms of 4 Keying the meeting.
 - * I led a Caring Visitor meeting on Saturday, August 7 for all current Caring Visitors. Three new assignments have been made. If you know of any members who are 'homecentered' please tell us and notify them of this ministry.
 - * Stephen Ministers had a potluck dinner at my home on August 3. Good time had by all. We honored Lyn McAuliffe for her 10 years of service as a Stephen Minister.
 - * Usher meeting around Hospitality on 8/15 and 8/29. There was lively discussion on everything from Fellowship Pads to Weather Alerts. Lowell Palmquist from the Emergency Preparedness Task Force made a presentation on their draft emergency document. People expressed gratitude for conversation and the desire for more. About 35 ushers were in attendance on 8/15.
 - * Jesus and Java, our Summer Wednesday evening worship concluded. It was a 4 Key worship service. Our objective of creating a more intimate worship space was accomplished. We will review and decide what other characteristics were helpful or not.
 - * July and August were full of celebrations: Rick Seaton, Wedding, Mary Lloyd, Christmas. Fellowship, enjoyment and laughter happened at these events which are vital to the health of a congregational system.
6. Detailed Plans or Next Steps:
 - * Conversations are underway for next steps on another revision of the bulletin.

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- *Working with staff on programming for the fall: especially confirmation.
- * We are excited about 90 Day Bible. Our start date will be September 26. Options to read will be on the web and also an audio option. Sign-ups happening now!
- * The Synod WELCA Convention will be here at Bethany in late September. We will welcome women to a weekend of theology and growth with Rev. Barbara Lundblad.
- * I enjoyed vacation August 16-23 in God's creation: Yankton, South Dakota.

Bethany Lutheran Church
Council Report



1. Reported By: Pastor Ronald T. Glusenkamp
2. Organization: Church Council August 2010 Meeting
3. Date: August 24, 2010
4. Report Purpose and Scope:
2 Articles for your reading pleasure: "The Perils of 'Wannabe Cool' Christianity" and "Congregations Gone Wild." (see attached)
5. Summary for Council:
Plans for Fall are unfolding.
Pastoral Intern Jess Harris Daum has started her ministry among us.
There will be a "caring conversation" this Sunday, August 29th on the 8am worship service.
6. Detailed Plans or Next Steps:
Reason #10 - Terry P.
Why People are Coming Back to Church - Del H.
How Do I Go Back to Church - Michelle S.K.
More Tips on Going Back to Church - Derek B.

Review of Services

August 1 Terrie Miller Thanksgiving @8am (Lovely Day)

August 8 Marriage Sunday bring a pound of rice for each year you've been married
3,566 pounds were donated

August 15

8 and 9 am Mary, Mother of our Lord Sunday- faithful Mary, faithful song, faithful God!

9 am food breakdown for METRO CARE RING MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

10:30am Paul Schaier Sunday (Fantastic Celebration)

August 22 Mary Lloyd at 10:30am service GREAT SEND OFF

August 29 Conversation on Worship

Commissioning at 9am service of ss teachers/faith formation leaders

September 5 Vocation Sunday

Blessing of Hands

September 12

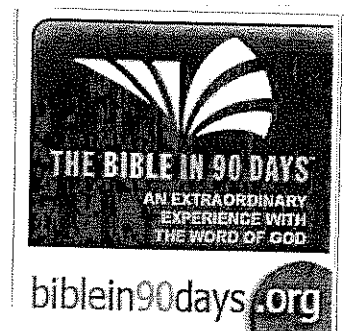
Back to Church Sunday

Lutheran College Night

September 19

Pastoral Intern Jess' first sermon among us

2nd Wind Walk



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HOUSES OF WORSHIP | AUGUST 13, 2010

The Perils of 'Wannabe Cool' Christianity

By BRETT MCCRACKEN

(Please see Corrections & Amplifications item below.)

"How can we stop the oil gusher?" may have been the question of the summer for most Americans. Yet for many evangelical pastors and leaders, the leaking well is nothing compared to the threat posed by an ongoing gusher of a different sort: Young people pouring out of their churches, never to return.

As a 27-year-old evangelical myself, I understand the concern. My peers, many of whom grew up in the church, are losing interest in the Christian establishment.

Recent statistics have shown an increasing exodus of young people from churches, especially after they leave home and live on their own. In a 2007 study, Lifeway Research determined that 70% of young Protestant adults between 18-22 stop attending church regularly.

Statistics like these have created something of a mania in recent years, as baby-boomer evangelical leaders frantically assess what they have done wrong (why didn't megachurches work to attract youth in the long term?) and scramble to figure out a plan to keep young members engaged in the life of the church.

Increasingly, the "plan" has taken the form of a total image overhaul, where efforts are made to rebrand Christianity as hip, countercultural, relevant. As a result, in the early 2000s, we got something called "the emerging church"—a sort of postmodern stab at an evangelical reform movement. Perhaps because it was too "let's rethink everything" radical, it fizzled quickly. But the impulse behind it—to rehabilitate Christianity's image and make it "cool"—remains.

There are various ways that churches attempt to be cool. For some, it means trying to seem more culturally savvy. The pastor quotes Stephen Colbert or references Lady Gaga during his sermon, or a church sponsors a screening of the R-rated "No Country For Old Men." For others, the emphasis is on looking cool, perhaps by giving the pastor a metrosexual makeover, with skinny jeans and an \$80 haircut, or by insisting on trendy eco-friendly paper and helvetica-only fonts on all printed materials. Then there is the option of holding a worship service in a bar or nightclub (as is the case for L.A.'s Mosaic church, whose downtown location meets at a nightclub called Club Mayan).

"Wannabe cool" Christianity also manifests itself as an obsession with being on the technological cutting edge. Churches like Central Christian in Las Vegas and Liquid Church in New Brunswick, N.J., for example, have online church services where people can have a worship experience at an "iCampus." Many other churches now encourage texting, Twitter and iPhone interaction with the pastor during their services.

But one of the most popular—and arguably most unseemly—methods of making Christianity hip is to make it shocking. What better way to appeal to younger generations than to push the envelope and go where no fundamentalist has gone before?

Sex is a popular shock tactic. Evangelical-authored books like "Sex God" (by Rob Bell) and "Real Sex" (by Lauren

Winner) are par for the course these days. At the same time, many churches are finding creative ways to use sex-themed marketing gimmicks to lure people into church.

Oak Leaf Church in Cartersville, Georgia, created a website called yourgreatsexlife.com to pique the interest of young seekers. Flamingo Road Church in Florida created an online, anonymous confessional (IveScrewedUp.com), and had a web series called MyNakedPastor.com, which featured a 24/7 webcam showing five weeks in the life of the pastor, Troy Gramling. Then there is Mark Driscoll at Seattle's Mars Hill Church—who posts Q&A videos online, from services where he answers questions from people in church, on topics such as "Biblical Oral Sex" and "Pleasuring Your Spouse."

But are these gimmicks really going to bring young people back to church? Is this what people really come to church for? Maybe sex sermons and indie-rock worship music do help in getting people in the door, and maybe even in winning new converts. But what sort of Christianity are they being converted to?

In his book, "The Courage to Be Protestant," David Wells writes: "The born-again, marketing church has calculated that unless it makes deep, serious cultural adaptations, it will go out of business, especially with the younger generations. What it has not considered carefully enough is that it may well be putting itself out of business with God.

"And the further irony," he adds, "is that the younger generations who are less impressed by whiz-bang technology, who often see through what is slick and glitzy, and who have been on the receiving end of enough marketing to nauseate them, are as likely to walk away from these oh-so-relevant churches as to walk into them."

If the evangelical Christian leadership thinks that "cool Christianity" is a sustainable path forward, they are severely mistaken. As a twentysomething, I can say with confidence that when it comes to church, we don't want cool as much as we want real.

If we are interested in Christianity in any sort of serious way, it is not because it's easy or trendy or popular. It's because Jesus himself is appealing, and what he says rings true. It's because the world we inhabit is utterly phony, ephemeral, narcissistic, image-obsessed and sex-drenched—and we want an alternative. It's not because we want more of the same.

Corrections & Amplifications

Pastor Mark Driscoll at Seattle's Mars Hill Church has talked about sexual topics in church services but says he has not delivered sermons with sex-themed titles. An earlier version of this column mistakenly used the word sermon.

Mr. McCracken's book, "Hipster Christianity: Where Church and Cool Collide" (Baker Books) was published this month.

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PRINTER-FRIENDLY FORMAT
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August 7, 2010

Congregations Gone Wild

By G. JEFFREY MacDONALD

Swampscott, Mass.

THE American clergy is suffering from burnout, several new studies show. And part of the problem, as researchers have observed, is that pastors work too much. Many of them need vacations, it's true. But there's a more fundamental problem that no amount of rest and relaxation can help solve: congregational pressure to forsake one's highest calling.

The pastoral vocation is to help people grow spiritually, resist their lowest impulses and adopt higher, more compassionate ways. But churchgoers increasingly want pastors to soothe and entertain them. It's apparent in the theater-style seating and giant projection screens in churches and in mission trips that involve more sightseeing than listening to the local people.

As a result, pastors are constantly forced to choose, as they work through congregants' daily wish lists in their e-mail and voice mail, between paths of personal integrity and those that portend greater job security. As religion becomes a consumer experience, the clergy become more unhappy and unhealthy.

The trend toward consumer-driven religion has been gaining momentum for half a century. Consider that in 1955 only 15 percent of Americans said they no longer adhered to the faith of their childhood, according to a Gallup poll. By 2008, 44 percent had switched their religious affiliation at least once, or dropped it altogether, the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life found. Americans now sample, dabble and move on when a religious leader fails to satisfy for any reason.

In this transformation, clergy have seen their job descriptions rewritten. They're no longer expected to offer moral counsel in pastoral care sessions or to deliver sermons that make the comfortable uneasy. Church leaders who continue such ministerial traditions pay dearly. A few years ago, thousands of parishioners quit Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, Minn., and Community Church of Joy in Glendale, Ariz., when their respective preachers refused to bless the congregations' preferred political agendas and consumerist lifestyles.

I have faced similar pressures myself. In the early 2000s, the advisory committee of my small

congregation in Massachusetts told me to keep my sermons to 10 minutes, tell funny stories and leave people feeling great about themselves. The unspoken message in such instructions is clear: give us the comforting, amusing fare we want or we'll get our spiritual leadership from someone else.

Congregations that make such demands seem not to realize that most clergy don't sign up to be soothsayers or entertainers. Pastors believe they're called to shape lives for the better, and that involves helping people learn to do what's right in life, even when what's right is also difficult. When they're being true to their calling, pastors urge Christians to do the hard work of reconciliation with one another before receiving communion. They lead people to share in the suffering of others, including people they would rather ignore, by experiencing tough circumstances — say, in a shelter, a prison or a nursing home — and seeking relief together with those in need. At their courageous best, clergy lead where people aren't asking to go, because that's how the range of issues that concern them expands, and how a holy community gets formed.

Ministry is a profession in which the greatest rewards include meaningfulness and integrity. When those fade under pressure from churchgoers who don't want to be challenged or edified, pastors become candidates for stress and depression.

Clergy need parishioners who understand that the church exists, as it always has, to save souls by elevating people's values and desires. They need churchgoers to ask for personal challenges, in areas like daily devotions and outreach ministries.

When such an ethic takes root, as it has in generations past, then pastors will cease to feel like the spiritual equivalents of concierges. They'll again know joy in ministering among people who share their sense of purpose. They might even be on fire again for their calling, rather than on a path to premature burnout.

G. Jeffrey MacDonald, a minister in the United Church of Christ, is the author of "Thieves in the Temple: The Christian Church and the Selling of the American Soul."