

Bethany Lutheran Church
Report to the Church Council

Dr. Paul Hill, Vibrant Faith Ministries Coach

The Goal of Coaching

- **Help congregational leaders grow spiritually**
- **Create a reflective and learning environment**
- **Provide a safe context to discuss tough questions and issues**
- **Teach and implement effective practices in vibrant faith formation**
- **Identify overall strategic goals**
- **Identify action steps and hold the leadership accountable**

Some General Observations

- **Bethany is a metropolitan congregation**
- **Bethany has a solid tradition of strong pastoral leadership**
- **Bethany prides itself in its worship and music ministries**
- **Bethany is a busy place**
- **Although large, council members report they have found friends, intimacy and closeness within the Bethany community**
- **Like all large congregations, Bethany is strongly programmatic in a world seeking relationships**
- **Like all congregations, Bethany is struggling with finances**

Most Recently: The Perfect Storm

- **Transition to new pastoral leadership**
- **Chronic, formerly unaddressed, staffing issues**
- **Economic recession impact on finances**
- **Quick exit of a key youth ministry staffer**
- **Uncertainty regarding the sexuality vote**
- **Bethany's history regarding race and class has created, for some, a "consumer Christianity" mentality**
- **Chronic anxiety throughout the congregation and culture**

Comment on Staffing Issues

- **“The unmotivated are invulnerable
to insight”** Edwin Friedman

Comment on chronic anxiety

- **“The chronically anxious are invulnerable to wisdom.”**

Five Aspects of Chronic Anxiety

- Reactivity: reflexive, exaggeration, loss of resiliency-playfulness
- Herding: herding and organizing around dysfunction, adapts to group immaturity
- Blame displacement: fault projection, quick to blame, cynical pessimism, focus on safety rather than adventure
- Quick-Fix Mentality: simple answers, low pain threshold, flavor-of-the-month solutions, quest for certainty

Five Aspects continued...

- **Lack of Leadership: frozen, defensive, reflexive, fearful, visionless**

Current Observations

- Council and leadership are intentionally growing spiritually and see this activity as central to the life and mission of Bethany:
 - Four Key EVERYTHING!
 - Book of Faith Congregation...good idea
- Council and leadership are on the “other side” of the perfect storm although the waters are still choppy
- There is a sense that the hard work done in clarifying the vision and mission of Bethany is now taking root in many aspects of the congregation...faith formation (language fatigue?)

• The theological concept of “the priesthood of all believers” is welcome by some, and seen as a problem by the “consumer Christians”

- Programmatic vs. relational
- Provide services vs. serving others

• More work needs to be done to help the congregation understand ministry in daily life or vocation (Four Key EVERYTHING in the home)

- 1 Caring *Conversational*
- 2 Distinct -
- 3 Service -
- 4 Devote -

- **The vocabulary of vibrant faith formation has taken root in the council and leaders**
 - **Six circles where the Spirit blows**
 - **Five principles for effective faith formation**
 - **Four Key Practices**
 - **AAA Christian disciples (authentic, available, affirming)**

- **Equipping households to live out the Four Keys has not taken deep root.**
- **Pastoral identity around vibrant faith formation is emerging**
- **More stories of success and transformation need to be told**
- **The council and leaders should read and discuss *From Great Omission to Vibrant***

Faith

- **Financial stewardship issues should continue to be framed in the context of faith formation and service to others.**
 - **God is up to something here in this place!**
 - **Attitude of gratitude**

Next Steps

- **Coaching will continue once a month**
- **Scuba rule: Plan your dive and dive your plan...stay with it**
- **It starts and ends with your own spiritual journey...tend it!**
- **Four Key your life and household**
- **Question: do you need a development officer?**