

## **Findings Report**

### **Community Congregational Church**

**Franklin, IN**

**May 22, 2010**

**Produced by**

**Paul Cornwell and Wayne Lipscomb**

### **Introduction**

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! Thank you for allowing Wayne and I to serve you. The purpose of our work with you was to assess your current situation, in particular, determining what conflicts and significant issues you are facing. This report will include our major findings. These include observations we made and recommendations that we believe will assist you in responding to the issues and conflicts in a Biblically faithful manner.

As I stated in my oral report, this is a Tender Situation – I hope you heard the tenderness of my heart as I shared on Saturday night. While we understand that it is our Lord who transforms the heart and redeems issues, we are here to help. We believe that when Christians respond to any conflict in a Biblically faithful manner two things result: God is pleased and resolution becomes possible.

The following information is offered from a pastor's heart. It is shared in order to hopefully empower you to personally and as a congregation respond to God, each other, and any situation in a Christ honoring way. May He be pleased with our effort to 'be at peace with everyone'!

### **The Setting**

Introduction

The complexities of your situation are real. Anyone who thinks this is a simply situation, for example solved by one action or thing, is mistaken. At one point in the interviews I

actually got rather discouraged. My partner naturally took the lead in questioning...I don't even think he noticed...but I had this sense of foreboding. The seriousness of your situation must not be trivialized.

I think we experience challenging emotions during serious conflict naturally. No one should give up at a time like that. Instead it is a time to express faith and ask key questions.

At one point during this interview I asked myself – so how many issues are involved here? There were many so, instead of listing them I listed the categories of issues...I listed 6. Then the person being interviewed identified a 7<sup>th</sup>. That caught my attention. Here are the six and the person's seventh.

- 1) Cultural Issues
- 2) Generational Issues
- 3) Functional Issues
- 4) Heart Issues
- 5) Sin Issues
- 6) Relational Issues
- 7) Crazy Issues

As Wayne and I processed the issues we came up with the following list of observations. We have outlined these for ease of understanding. Some of these may be hard to hear. We pray you will listen with the ears of your heart.

1. There are Major Shifts taking place
  - a. Generational - *60 and 70 year olds described themselves as younger than Seniors*; there are at least 3 generational groups of adults in the church.
  - b. Community – *city is encroaching on rural; farming is decreasing; the a person makes a living is changing*
  - c. Cultural – clearly Mid-Western vs. North Eastern; to me there seems to be 3 cultures connected to how people generally live – norms are not the same, values are prioritized differently

2. There is an attempt to solve these through less than adequate means
  - a. Organizational change is being appealed to as the basis for how the church would better operate or become healthy
    - i. For Example:
      1. We work with every type of church government out there. I have in the past year personally worked with Single Pastor Led, Elder Driven, Elder Led, Deacon Led, Committee Led, Leadership Team Led, Congregational, and Episcopal governed churches. I have seen unhealthy churches in each category and I have seen healthy churches of each governance model. Clearly the type of governance does not make a healthy or an unhealthy church!
  - b. The past is being seen as a more valid way to live than the present AND the present is being seen as a more valid way to live than the past!
  - c. Many past offenses have been buried...as someone else's problem or responsibility. This has the most damaging impact of all of these inadequate attempts.
    - i. Principle: Forgiveness is the Basis for EVERYTHING else in the Christian life and in the Christian Church. To forfeit forgiveness as PRIMARY is to misunderstand the Gospel!
    - ii. If you and I are not making as first importance each person's experience of forgiveness we have forgotten the basis upon which we live and breathe.
    - iii. Remember, Hebrews 4:1-2; James 1:16-27
3. There is a Mistaken Emphasis being placed on Being Right!
  - a. Rightness Leads to Camps
  - b. Camps Lead to Division
  - c. Division leads to Ineffective Ministry – I Corinthians 1:10

- d. So, no matter who wins Christ and the Church loses
  - i. Example: A Florida Church
  - ii. I Corinthians 1 - 4

Having made these observations we then asked, 'what were the motivating factors for what we observed?'

### **The Major Motivating Factors:**

#### 1. Fear

- a. *Anxiety*
- b. *Insecurity*
- c. *Insomnia*
- d. *Rejection*

We asked "What is your greatest fear?" Here are just 2 of the answers:

- *I fear our church won't survive*
- *I fear we will misrepresent Christianity*

#### 2. Pride

- a. Jealousy – See Ephesians 4:17-32
- b. Envy
- c. Arrogance – See I Corinthians 4
- d. Superiority – See I Corinthians 2

#### 3. Confusion

- a. The Illusion of Control
- b. The Problem of Distrust
- c. "I wish people would loosen up."
- d. "Why does church have to be so hard?"

Motivating factors lead to actions, many times sinful. See James 3:13-4:10 for a Biblical illustration of the connection between motivations and actions.

### **The Major Sins displayed in behavior and attitude:**

- 1) Unresolved Anger – Ephesians 4:26-27
- 2) Resentment
- 3) Revengeful Desires
- 4) Failure to Apply the Gospel

## **Our Findings:**

The following is one way to describe what we observed. Each statement is followed by one example or illustration of how that finding was observed. While other examples could have been given we share these for clarity.

### **1. You are a church of Divided Loyalties**

The Clear Example:

Disagreements over Governance have evolved into Battles with clear battle lines and plan drawn.

So you plan the Blame Game...Most of what we heard laid blame on someone else. Some demonstrated a good sense of how they have contributed.

### **2. You have almost entirely Frustrated Leaders**

We found few board and committee leaders who had been trained for the rigors of their role. There was a clear difference of board or committee experience based on the abilities the chair brought to the position held. The frustration produced by this lack of training was mostly undetected by the board/committee members. This resulted in a sense of aloneness in the leader. To further complicate the situation, some chairpersons expressed frustration to the point of not wanting to lead again.

Frustration of leaders was also produced by board/committee member challenges. These came from two sources: the already mentioned lack of training or variance of leadership skill of chairpersons; and the conflicted responses of board/committee members. There was little evidence that members understood or were committed to common goals, expect in larger issues. For example everyone would say that the committee was tasked to glorify God. However when specific goals or objectives were in view they was no clear sense of commitment.

### **3. You have allowed Personal Opinion to be Elevated to the Position of Essential Truth**

- 1) Personal Beliefs are Valued over the Congregational Good
- 2) Personal Perspective is elevated above Biblical Guidelines

For example, many of you described being in conflict with another person. When asked if you have talked with that person about the conflict, about 2/3rds of you said no.

When asked why?, few had anything close to an adequate answer. Very few

demonstrated knowledge of the guidelines Jesus clearly gave us for how to deal with such conflicts.

Of the 1/3<sup>rd</sup> that did approach the person one of 3 things was clear:

1. The person used an adversarial method, which alienated the other person.
  - a. No one with whom this was discussed displayed the knowledge of or ability to have an effective conversation with another person with whom they disagreed.
  - b. Mostly they attacked the other person
  - c. Or they defended their position on the issue, which the other person has already disagreed with
2. The person approached the person at an inappropriate time, ex – in public; with other people;
3. The person displayed an inability to know how to effectively speak to the other person, thus the conversation went poorly or escalated into a worse situation.

Many of you said you wouldn't speak to the person because you expected it to go badly. And due to this list of how others have similar conversations that expectation is probably a fair one. There is a clear need to learn a different way to approach conflicts with one another.

#### **4. You have demonstrated a large degree of Unrealistic Expectations of others.**

When expectations are unrealistic they either have to be changed, creating a realistic expectation, or they end in disappointment. Most people we interviewed displayed high levels of disappointment in the Pastors, the Deacons and other Leaders, and in the Members. The disappointment traveled both directions.

I am not saying this to lay blame...I am saying this to reveal the "Landscape of your Church". People come to church and to meetings expecting to be disappointed.

When disappointment is experienced and repeated in a relationship with another person, it results in anger toward the person, dissatisfaction with that person, or a sense of hopelessness. Obviously these do not make for healthy relationships.

#### **5. Many have become Hopeless.**

When hopelessness invades a church it is indicative that Core Truths Christ and the Apostles gave us are missing. Jesus is our Hope! When hopelessness is present the impact of Christ being in that person's life is weakened at best.

I will give you two examples:

- I saw no evidence that people understand the difference between making an Apology and Acknowledging the Hurt of another person. To equalize this finding allow me to quickly add – I find the same thing true in most places I go around the United States.
- The Lack of Morale is at dangerous levels. We saw this in the Staff, Lay Leaders, and Members.

I need to add: this is totally reversible! The Gospel, when focused on, always produces HOPE.

## **Recommendations**

### **The Immediate Recommendations**

1. Conduct at least 3 Key Mediations between Key Leaders
  - a. We identified several needed mediations
  - b. We believe at least 3 should be conducted in the near future
  - c. We believe IF THESE 3 LEADERS FIND PEACE it will have an amazing impact on the entire congregation
2. Train Leadership in 3 Key Areas
  - a. Leading the Church without Dividing It
  - b. Gaining Durable Agreements in Crucial Issues
  - c. Becoming Exemplary Leaders
3. Teach the Congregation Biblical Peacemaking with an emphasis on:
  - a. The 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> A of the 7 A's of Confession
  - b. Identifying Heart Issues through the Progression of an Idol
  - c. Transactional Forgiveness
  - d. Repentance as an Attitude

#### 4. Coaching Key Leaders

- a. There are 3 Key Leaders I believe we can help

### **The Long-Term Recommendations**

1. Use the 5 hours of post visit consultation!
2. We recommend training for all leaders of councils, committees, teams, and boards beyond personal peacemaking skills (see Immediate Recommendation #3); include How to Lead a meeting when conflict or controversy is present;
  - i. Provide “Getting to the Heart of Conflict” training to all Pastors, Elders, and other Key Leaders. Applying this training both personally and organizationally is necessary.
  - ii. Using *the PAUSE Principle* as a model for discussing difficult or controversial issues is the transferable skill we suggest you focus on in organizational situations.
3. We recommend you send a minimum of 3 key leaders to *Conflict Coaching and Mediation* training offered by Peacemaker Ministries. (See [www.peacemaker.net](http://www.peacemaker.net); click Training)
4. We recommend you provide training in communication skills for all leaders with the goal of better communication as you serve our Lord as leaders of CCC.
  - i. This could include:
    1. Leading through Questions
    2. The Role of Humility in Listening
    3. Making Charitable Judgments
    4. Leaving Meetings with Unified and Durable Agreements
    5. Dealing with Criticism
5. We recommend an intentional focus on shepherding as *the* foundational responsibility in ministry.
  - i. Basis:
    1. It is a Biblical mandate to Pastors and Elders (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1ff)
    2. It is the best method to approach current and past members.
    3. It is in keeping with the keeping the Gospel central in Ministry expression.

- ii. Implementation:
    1. Study The Leadership Opportunity together as leaders.
    2. Expand training in Biblical Shepherding
    3. Identify specific areas where deeper training is needed and provide such training assuring each leader is implementing the skills and focuses of that area: example – Leading through Questions.
6. We recommend you conduct an annual educational campaign for the entire congregation teaching Biblical Peacemaking.
- i. This could include: Offering the Small Group Series for Biblical Peacemaking; Preaching a Biblical Peacemaking Sermon Series; Conducting The Leadership Opportunity Leaders Study; Teach The Young Peacemaker to your children and The Peacemaker Student Edition for youth.
  - ii. Consider offering these simultaneously so each person in the church is focusing on Biblical Peacemaking at the same time in 2011.
  - iii. Resources: The Peacemaking Church Resource Set; The Leadership Opportunity DVD Study Series; The Young Peacemaker materials; The Peacemaker: Student Edition by Ken Sande
7. Consider inviting Paul and Wayne back in 2011 for a refresher weekend. This is a custom event that would be created in consultation with what you are experiencing at that time.

**Conclusion:**

Peacemaker Ministries exist to assist and equip Christians and their churches to respond to conflict in a Biblically faithful manner. If you believe that we can assist you further implementing any of these recommendations please call Paul. It would be our joy to serve you!

Receive the blessing of our Lord:

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever, Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21 NASV