

the north west baptist

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THE RISKY CHOICE OF CHURCH TRANSFORMATION

Dr. Charles Revis,
Executive Minister
ABC/NW

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Growing Healthy, Mission-Focused Churches that Multiply Disciples and Churches



Life is a series of events, some of them benign, and some radically life changing. I made a decision on a fateful morning, December 3rd 2010, that has transformed my life.

In a split second I chose to go down a short, powder-covered chute rather than follow the main trail at Silver Mountain. Usually it's no big deal. As I skied out of the chute towards the groomed snow there was a gully I didn't see or anticipate. There had not been enough snow to fill in this depression. I flew across the chasm and my skis slammed into the berm on the other side. Instantly both skis clicked off and I was propelled through the air at about 20 mph. As my head slammed into the hard snow my body flipped forward in a summersault. In that instance my neck hyper-extended backwards in a whiplash motion. My spinal cord was pressed hard against my spinal column and I sustained a "spinal cord contusion". A dime-size bruise through the core of the spinal cord is another way to describe it. In a word: serious! When I regained consciousness I could not move or feel my legs, arms and hands. And, I was terrified.

Long story short: through God's grace I am able to walk. (If you can call it that; my ambulatory efforts look more like a drunken shuffle.) I can move my arms and hands, but my forearms and fingertips feel like they are constantly asleep. I have neurogenic pain in my forearms, legs and torso. My muscles are weak, and I have little stamina. The recovery is SLOW, which is the nature of a spinal cord injury. But, I am making progress. I just wish it were faster.

Although I'm writing this to fill you in briefly as to what has happened to me, I

also want to make a few comments on "transformation." My life was transformed in the blink of an eye. In this instance it wasn't for the good. Yet, there are also moments, even seasons, when our lives are transformed for the better. I believe that embedded in the Gospel is the promise that Jesus Christ will radically transform us from spiritually dead people into people who are alive unto the Living God (2 Cor 5:17, Eph 5:8). The power of the Gospel changes us and that is what we proclaim. Jesus transforms lives!

I also believe that Jesus transforms churches. The primary reason is so the church will always be a world-changing, missionary band of disciples as He intends for it to be. The world is a moving target. Each generation, each community and each church's context are constantly changing. New methods and approaches must be employed. What worked ten years ago, or even a year ago, may no longer work today. To be effective the church must be willing to continuously change, as Jesus Christ leads. Making the choice not to change can lead a congregation towards ineffectiveness and slow death.

Another reason for church transformation is that by default it is human nature to allow the church to calcify. We tend to play it safe, pull back from the challenges of being world-changers, and settle for routines and traditions. The majority of these are inward-focused. We perpetuate programs that are no longer effective. We insist that certain changes must not happen. We claim our piece of turf and exercise control over it as if we own the church. Lack of spiritual vigilance and love for comfort causes the church to step away from mission and settle for a

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rocking chair existence. In Life-Cycle terms the church moves over the hill into “institutionalism” and “decline towards death.” Church transformation resists this natural tendency. It seeks to keep vision alive, the mission clear, ministry effective and the primary focus outward.

There is a third reason the church needs transformation. It is all too easy for the spiritual vitality of the church to diminish. Over time the church’s love for Jesus Christ can grow cold. Passion for Christ wanes. The congregation goes about its

normal routines, but the air has gone out of the tires. Jesus and Paul have much to say in the Scriptures about being spiritually vigilant (Luke 10:27; Romans 12:11). Such words are directed to the church as well as individuals. Constant spiritual renewal is a vital part of church transformation and we must be vigilant to keep our love for Jesus Christ strong.

I believe in church transformation. It’s what Jesus wants from His church. Churches have a choice: to embrace transformation or drift into calcification. Transformation is riskier and more difficult. But, it is where

Jesus wants His Body to live, for the sake of a world that needs the Gospel. Traditionalism, old routines, and spiritual passivity are also choices that churches make. They are easier to embrace. In the long run they are deadly. I pray that your church will seek transformation; to make the choice to embrace an exciting adventure of risk-taking ministry. There are no guarantees of safety. That is the nature of risk. Yet, it is the path that Jesus calls both churches and individuals to pursue. “Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and the Gospel will find it.” (Mark 8:35)



Carrying On the Work of the Region

Jim Amend, ABC/NW Region Board President

Dear Friends of ABC/NW,

I bring you the greetings of your Region Board as we begin a new year together. As you are aware, we enter this year with a degree of concern and uncertainty as we follow the progress of our Executive Minister, Rev. Dr. Charles Revis, in his recuperation from a skiing accident he had at the end of last year. If you are subscribed to the Region Prayer Connection, you have been kept apprised of his condition. While nobody knows how long it will take for him to recover fully, I am happy to say that his strong sense of purpose is working in conjunction with our Lord’s healing hand, and the efforts of many doctors to give Charles a positive spirit and hopeful perspective. He has met many times with his staff and the Region Executive Committee by way of telephone conference-call and his voice is strong and his heart for our Region is resolute. I had the opportunity to visit with him for a short time after his accident; I was blessed to see that his positive spirit was reflected in his smile, and his abiding desire to maintain the growing health of our Region was the primary topic of our discussion. We are blessed that our Lord has seen fit to protect Charles from the worst case scenario in regard to his accident,

and blessed that he is still engaged with leading our Region.

However, it will take some time for Charles to heal. The Executive Committee of the Region Board has met with Charles and Patti to discuss how we will do business during Charles’ convalescence. Charles will be consulted on all important issues, and the primary contact person will be Patti during this time. We are hoping that much of the “business” of the Region can be done primarily through Patti, Cherie’, part-time Consultants and through the LLC Mentor Pastors. As a Region we have already been making greater use of the above mentioned roles so we won’t have to reinvent the wheel. Through these people we will be able to carry on the work of the Region in Placement, Church Relations, Training Events like Tools of the Trade, Leadership Tune-up and Ethics Conferences, Biennial Preparations and LLC activities. For local situations feel free to contact the Mentor Pastor in your area. These contact numbers can be found on the Region Website:

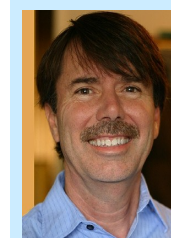
<http://abcnw.org/mentor-pastors/>

The Region Board is also working with Region Staff to move forward as

appropriate to implement some recommendations from our Region wide Assessment. We will continue to keep you informed as progress is made.

We join you in keeping Charles and Karen in our prayers as well as the rest of the ABC/NW Region staff. I look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

To subscribe to ABCNW Prayer Connection email updates, follow the link located in the footer of any page at abcnw.org



Featuring:

Dane Aaker
Pastor,

Centerpoint Church,
Colton, CA
www.centerpointcolton.com



The Practicality of Persistence

The Other Side of the Work of the Holy Spirit

Patricia Duckworth, Associate Executive Minister ABC/NW

It seems we live in a “world between.” On one side there is the push to get things done, an agenda that drives us, a timeline to meet ... behind all of which lies the nebulous goal of “success.” What that success is and how we define it is what makes it nebulous, if not frustrating. On the other side is our belief that God is sovereign, that God’s Spirit moves according to God’s plan and wisdom. Sometimes we can see; sometimes we “get it;” sometimes we even like what God is doing. But sometimes what God is doing and how God wants us be involved is a not clear.

What do we do in those in-between times?

In the past few years we have rightly refocused on taking the Gospel to folks where they are, not just waiting for them to come to us ... in a word: *outreach* or *being outward focused*. We’ve trained and talked; we’ve discussed and dissected. In many places our churches are seeing the Lord bear fruit, as some of the testimonies in this newsletter share. But let me ask the painful question: what about other places? The other side of the work of the Holy Spirit is in our persistence to carry out God’s work, even when the fruit grows slowly. Galatians 6:9 says “Do not be weary in doing good.”

Persistence has a number of facets but I would like to highlight two:

First, we must be persistent to keep the fires lit. If we do not put ourselves regularly in a place where the Lord can speak to us, draw us close, transform us into Christ-likeness, all else that follows will be discovered to be hollow and fake.

Second, we must be persistent in our relationships. There must be room for one more in our lives. *Every*

Christian needs to have someone in his/her life that is not a follower of Christ. I know, I know: one more thing for the “to do” list.

But there’s the rub. If that person – any person—is a task, a number, an “accomplishment” to us, then I believe it will be harder for God’s fruit to appear.

On the other hand, as we begin to see a person as the Lord does and care for them, Jesus has an open door. We are created relational creatures.

The outworking of that heart is finding ways to get involved in others’ lives. It used to be that pastors made “visits” – that was what *everybody* did a generation or two or more ago. There is a lot written on the cultural shift in relationships and some very worth the read. Given what IS, however, what do we do? How are we as followers of Christ to be?

I believe *each one of us* must be in our neighborhoods and communities making relationships. Each of us has to do that differently, partly by personality and partly by life circumstances. It was easier for John and I to be involved with young families when our own children were young. The schools always needed help with something. I did the annual book sale a few years. Then there was helping with the swim team. Of course, going to “do the task” didn’t make the relationships. Being interested in people with all their life stuff did. So if you are someone with children in the home, you have an avenue to connecting with other people through the interests of your children. Now the circumstances are different.

The natural connections easily made through children aren’t there. Now what? It may be stating the obvious, but we need to look at involvement with others around our interests. The kicker is that many of us only have one interest – the *institutional* church, the running of the organization. (That again is something we talked and read about over the past few years.) What is needed is that we develop other interests into which we can bring our love for Jesus.

There is more that can be said about that but let me move to examples. What do you like to do? Hiking? Fishing? Quilting? Engine repair? Gardening? Reading? Music? Is there a group in your community for that? Be persistent to find out. Then join it.

Be persistent in your presence. Be persistent in getting to know people.

If there aren’t groups in your community for your interest, start one. Yes, that is harder – but is it harder than starting a new Sunday school class or Bible study? Probably not. It might even be easier. Again, be persistent in meeting – *even when it starts small*. Be persistent in the follow through. If there is interest from those who attend, it will grow, especially if the foundation of the group is invitational.

A variation on a theme is to contribute to the community if you have a skill or resource. Occasionally, I teach philosophy, ethics or religion for the local college as an adjunct faculty. We have made relationships with people that would never have come any other way. It’s about the relationships and about persisting in developing them. However, I am NOT advocating that we practice insanity—continuing to do the same thing and hoping for different results. Neither am I suggesting that we continue doing what we’ve been doing if there isn’t room for new people in it. Honest evaluation and examination of

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Church Transformation Gets Personal

Worth Wilson, Pastor of Cle Elum Community Church pictured with his wife Sue located in Cle Elum, WA

cleelumcommunitychurch.org

Arriving from Vermont with my family in June 1999, we came to a unique situation. Since 1936 the Community Church has shared a pastor with the Mount Pisgah Presbyterian church in the town of Roslyn four miles away. Additionally, the Community Church is a Federated Church created in the merger of the First Baptist and the First Presbyterian Churches of Cle Elum in 1941. The churches moved into the facilities of First Baptist, and in 1966 added a Christian Education building. When called here, the Pastoral Search Committee Chair said to me, "Pastor Worth, you are different than any pastor we have ever had, but we know that we need to do something different or we will die."

The city of Cle Elum is nestled into the base on the eastern slope of the Central Washington Cascades on Interstate 90, about the last stop before crossing the mountains into metro Seattle. The vast majority of our population commutes an hour on average to work. The population is constantly fluctuating as people get tired of the winters, or the commute to work or to shop, but does not grow overall. The assessment done by the American Baptist Home Mission society in 1963 was and is true: Cle Elum is typical of a static mountain area. The population in 1963 was 1800; today the population today is around 1880. The community hasn't changed much and like many rural communities resists change. This community attitude was mirrored in a congregation that was in survival mode. They wanted change but resisted suggestions for change.

When I arrived, the average age of the church membership was over 75. The

average Sunday attendance was 59. However, the end of 2010 showed the sixth year of steady growth. Average Sunday attendance is 137 in two services. Our nursery is nearly overflowing and the 5 to 12 year olds participate in Junior Church. Average age in our congregation is now under 50.

How did God get us here? One of the first things that happened was I realized I was the biggest roadblock to transformation. My personal transformation occurred in several ways. First, ABCNW made a commitment to build leaders that were mission focused and disciple making. This commitment eventually led to the formation of Leadership Learning Communities (LLCs) which God has used to change me. God used our learning and praying together the friendship of my colleagues to impact my life and change me. Secondly, I made a commitment to love God with all my heart, not just in my words, to an hour a day for prayer and personal worship that is non-negotiable. Third, I learned to listen and trust when God is speaking to me, setting aside my fears, hesitations, my desires to boldly go where only God can go, fulfilling God-sized dreams. It was and still is scary at times as I follow God's leading into the unknown, less traveled paths of life.

One of our elders, Bill Doyle, has said, "This trust in the Holy Spirit is evident in the non-pledge giving of the congregation which continues to meet/exceed the budget and our growing needs. Our trust in God for the future is seen weekly in our newly built sanctuary which by the grace of the Holy Spirit has no debt. Additionally, the old church has been

remodeled into a fellowship hall with current code rest rooms, remodeled kitchen, and enlarged staff office spaces. Just this fall we finished the re-roofing of our older buildings, adding new siding and paint too. All debt free."

Transformation of the congregation began in the fall of 2003 when we committed to finding God's vision for the church. As a result of this search, several things began to change. Charles Spurgeon once said, "anytime God sets about to do something He first sets His people's hearts to prayer." That has been so true for us. The vision team was praying. The Elders were praying. Individuals began gathering in small groups to pray. We were seeking a vision, and God directed us to be risk takers and challenge the status quo. We changed worship. We added digital projection along with new music styles to worship. We added a contemporary service and continued the service even when only a handful of people showed up. We continued to trust God even when the numbers or the opinions of others said we were failing. We started to dream the dream of a new worship center/sanctuary that would allow us to provide an atmosphere of invitation. Most importantly, I continued to faithfully preach God's Word with an emphasis on His transforming grace that needs to touch us and our neighbors through the sharing of the gospel.

Our search led to the adoption of our vision which has radically changed the attitudes in our church. Bill Doyle also writes, "Our church's energy is now focused on the two Highest Commandments and the Great Commission rather than any and all 'programs' that come along." This new attitude can be seen in the steady growth of the number of baptisms over the years. One year the elders set a goal of 20 baptisms and my thought was, "How are we going to do that?" To my surprise when the year ended, we had baptized 20 people and did about the same number the next

"The church's transformation is paralleling the Pastor's faith. As Pastor Worth's trust in God and submission to God grows, he is leading more of the congregation to do likewise." Elder Bill Doyle

year. Our new missional attitude has produced a new guest friendly perspective in our people where guests are truly welcomed.

Our church has become mission and people focused.

With this growth has come the formation of what we call “Lifegroups” where we build relationships with each other. Our new attitude has birthed community service days, new Celebrate Recovery ministries, evangelistically focused VBS, and a renewed commitment by our members to serve our community.

It has been nearly 12 years on this roller coaster ride. We have moved from surviving church mode, to being on the road to thriving through the grace and mercy of our gracious God.

With His strength we pray that our passion will continue to be, “love God, love people and serve the world.”

1998



2011



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motives in prayer before the Lord will reveal if we need to persist or if we are just being insane.

I have used the word “persistent” several times, on purpose. I believe that sometimes the reason things don’t “stick” or even really get started is because we expect instant success. We pray (some), plan, set the date, invite. When the first time comes, sometimes it’s not what we wanted, hoped for, expected. After a few weeks where it isn’t meeting our expectations, we are off to something else. In our wake, we may be leaving the impression on those still attending that THEY aren’t worth our time or interest. And they find out we are Christians to boot. It could be that the Spirit was at work; we just gave up before the Spirit was done using us.

Persist. No excuses.

Transitions

Washington

- Sid Johnson is now Pastor at Spokane Valley Baptist Church (Jerry Springston served as Interim Pastor.)
- Stan Shipley began very recently as Pastor of FBC Buena
- Kittitas Community Church is being served by Steve Arington, who is replacing Greg Quinn.

Idaho

- Mike Harris ended his ministry with Arco Community Baptist Church. Mike Shepherd is the new Interim.
- Jim Loewen became Interim Pastor at Filer FBC

Montana

- Pateng Makdoh ended his ministry with FBC Hardin. No interim as been secured for the church at this time.
- Eureka: Pat Lovitt’s last Sunday was December 19, 2010; Jan Van der Poll will be Interim Pastor.
- Jay Smith began as Pastor at FBC Bozeman. (Dan Abrams was the Transitional Interim.)
- Andrew Young is Interim Pastor at FBC Helena. (Bob Wall was Interim)
- Jana Mertens ended her service as Youth Center Director and Administrative Assistant at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Roundup.
- Ryan Hillebrand ended his service as Youth Pastor to Belgrade Community Church.

Sunridge Community Church in Post Falls, Idaho conducted its last service on June 1st, 2010.

Pray for churches searching for a pastor:

Idaho:

Pocatello, FBC, Melba, Community Baptist Church, Payette, FBC, Filer, FBC, and Arco, Baptist Community Church

Montana:

Helena, FBC, Eureka, FBC, Hardin, FBC

Washington:

Spokane, Central Baptist Church, Kelso, FBC, Gorst, Baptist Community Church, Bellevue, Blessed Life Church (Cantonese-speaking pastor)

Congratulations:

John Ellis celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination on January 20. John served ABC Northwest in a variety of ways from 1985 to 2003. Previous to coming to the region staff, he pastored 4 churches in California. He and his wife Phyllis now live in Twin Falls, Idaho. John is the contact person for the ABC/NW’s Prayer Connection.



Embracing Transition

Dave Griewe, Pastor of The River Church

Located in Eagle, ID

www.riverchristianchurch.com

If there is one thing that's true about church planting, it that nothing stays the same for very long! Over the past year at The River Church, we have changed our location, our mission statement, our philosophy of ministry, and our strategy for reaching people for the Kingdom. Three key families came from sister churches to help us get started; they have since moved on. We began with three pastors all living on raised support. Two have moved on as of the end of 2010. Our youth ministry went through a change of leadership. We called an intern in September who quit in October. We have since staffed the youth ministry with volunteers. Fortunately, and by the grace of God, we have fully embraced each and every transition!

We have seen small but steady growth every month for the past six months, adding several new families and individuals who had previously been de-churched. Maybe the biggest change at The River is that we have embraced personal outreach by intentionally changing our world view to an "OIKOS" view. The Greek word OIKOS translates to "extended family." We understand that to mean that a Christ-follower evaluates life, its purpose and events. God has given each of us our own little niche of humanity. Everyone has been given, on the average, anywhere from eight to fifteen people whom God has supernaturally and strategically placed in our relational world. God has placed these people in our OIKOS, both for our benefit and for theirs; ours because we all need friends, and theirs so you can help them find their way to God. As we are in the process of understanding God's command to reach people for Christ, OIKOS has given us the intentional framework to reflect God's love to others. OIKOS helps us

see every relationship as a God-given opportunity to reach others for the Kingdom of God.

We laid the OIKOS foundation of teaching in September and October and put it into action immediately. November became "Minute to Win It" month, taking about 3 minutes in our services to play a game for no other reason than pure fun! (Remember John 10:10; abundant life?) It was a huge hit! Also during November we started Friend Day, picking a specific day for everyone to bring a friend to church. Our attendance grew by 50% that day! December we focused on Christmas. Our Chamber of Commerce sponsors "Eagle Country Christmas" in downtown Eagle. There we had a booth giving away complimentary hot chocolate and s'mores. As people "cooked" their s'mores around our huge fire pit, we invited them to our Community Christmas Eve service. Attendance on Christmas Eve was up 20% from the previous year, and we ended 2010 on a very positive note!

We are excitedly looking forward to what God will do at The River Church this year. Our focus through Easter is on spiritual growth and discipleship, while constantly keeping our eye on our OIKOS and who we can share our faith story with within our relational circle.

We appreciate your prayers for our continued growth; spiritually, numerically, and financially. Our biggest issue is finances. As a new church composed of previously de-churched and new believers, giving is a sensitive subject. I will be teaching on giving once in January and once in February. I ask for your prayers in particular for these Sundays. We also face a new contract with the school district in March,

which could see us looking for yet another meeting place. Please pray for God's guidance and will to be done.





Heading in the Right Direction

Daniel Espy, Pastor of The Bridge Church

Located in Snohomish, WA

thebridgetolife.com/wordpress

Do you ever wonder if you are leading your church in the right direction? As a young pastor I can say that this question has plagued me constantly. No matter how much I preach from the Bible or how hard I try to motivate everyone and organize everything, I always find myself wondering if I am leading in the right direction. I think there are two reasons for this: 1) there are innumerable books on how we should do church, each espousing its own idea of how to make a maximum impact for God and 2) as a pastor I want to see the church I lead have a radical impact on a dark and dying world. Yet in all my reading and asking questions, my church hasn't taken off like Real Life, Mars Hill, or any of the other churches that I have seen in magazines or on the web.

I have experienced a church plant that turned into a church merger and a senior pastor being asked to resign. By the amazing grace of God we have not only survived, but are beginning to thrive. We have faithfully preached the Gospel, baptized close to 75 people, farmed a community garden, given away over 15,000 lbs of food, partnered with the local Gospel Mission, helped battered women and children's shelters, preached through the book of Romans, started new community groups, and a plethora of many other good church things. In spite of this, there has always been this nagging question in the back of my mind, "Are we doing the right thing, or is there something else we should be doing?"

When the senior pastor resigned and I was asked to take over, the first thing I did was create a mission statement. And like anyone who doesn't know what they're doing, I just combined two mission statements from various books in an attempt to give us some direction. Though this statement was missional and theologically sound, there was one problem: it wasn't who our church was. It didn't connect with the name of our church, its people or the direction that God was taking us.

In a phone visit with Charles Revis, he suggested that I read the book *Church Unique*, thinking that it might help with the plethora of questions I had about church mission and vision. He also told me that they had a coaching process that accompanied the book, and he thought our church would be a perfect candidate.

The process, called CoLab, was just what our leadership team needed. It is a 6 month process whereby a coach guides your leadership team through each stage of mission and vision.

As a part of the process, your church meets with several other churches, once a month, to systematically go through coaching. Between monthly coaching sessions, you are encouraged to meet with other key leaders of your church to discover what God has been doing in your church and in your community. Upon completion,

you have a clear framework within which to base all of your leadership decisions and a living language that contains your mission, values, strategy, and measures to communicate to every member of the congregation. These can easily be incorporated into each and every message that comes from church leadership. Most importantly for me, there was no more wondering if you are doing exactly what God wants you to do.

Having completed the CoLab process, The Bridge Church now has a framework which guides us like the banks of a river. We now have a clear, definable process through which God is leading us to be on mission with him. We no longer wonder if we are headed in the right direction. If you are looking for something that will help your church clarify its direction and unify its people, then I would highly recommend looking into the CoLab.

If anyone is interested in talking about the CoLab process, contact me at Daniel@thebridgetolife.com

Assessment Bears Fruit

Corey Laughery, Pastor of the Federated Church located in Palouse, WA

pfc.palousechurch.org

Palouse Federated Church underwent an assessment by ABC/NW in May 2010. Preparation for this was a good self-learning process. The weekend itself was eye-opening, and time since then has been fruitful.

We were given nine recommendations and are still "in process" on most of them; however, we have made progress:

- We hired an Associate Pastor to help us develop some of our team-based ministries; Pastor Corey handed off youth ministry to Mark- a direct recommendation.
- We trained five lay people as Ministers of Visitation.
- We added a Sunday Evening coffee-house style worship service in our Fellowship Hall.
- With Pastor Corey having more time to be an ambassador to the community, we held an area

We heartily recommend an assessment. You won't always hear things that are easy to hear, but you will be given healthy perspective on how to lead your church into more effective service for Christ and His Kingdom.

wide leadership breakfast to bless community leaders. Over 25 city, county, school district and non-profit leaders attended. They were given the book *Leveraging Your Leadership Style* as a gift.

- We improved the children's ministry area in our basement. We knocked down walls and made classrooms larger, brighter and more colorful. We also added signage upstairs for parents new to our church to more easily locate the area.
- Having scored low on evangelism and outreach, we are teaching our people how to share their faith with others.
- We now have more small groups than ever before, reaching between 70-80 adults weekly.
- Our congregation has become spiritually vigilant and focused on our mission: *To Worship God and Form One Another into Loving Servants of Jesus Christ and the World.*

- We developed and executed a successful pre-Christmas "Parent's Day Out" outreach
- Four people came forward to receive baptism in January. We will baptize seven soon.
- We began a weekly discussion group "Questions of Truth" for those that have questions about God and faith

The first six months of 2010 (including Easter) we averaged 100 people in Sunday worship. The last four months we averaged 112. For a town of 1,000 people, we think God is up to something good.

