



▶ OUR OUTREACH



▶ OUR WORSHIP



▶ OUR CARE OF MEMBERS

Aug 9, 2011 | Issue 3 of 5

Epiphany vision

EPIPHANY'S PURPOSE IS TO LOVE JESUS BY SERVING OTHERS.

A Message from Pastor Pete

OUTREACH RATIONALE

Outreach purpose is to love Jesus by serving those who are not members of Epiphany

George Barna, in his book, *The Frog in the Kettle*, maintains that 80% of a congregation's neighbors do not know the congregation exists. If neighbors know there is a church across the street from their home, they cannot

identify its denomination or any general inquiries about the congregation's ministries. Why is it that neighbors do not know of a congregation's existence?

Alan Klaas, in his book, *In Search of the Unchurched*, helps to answer this question. His research shows that 80% of the members of a typical congregation believe that the congregation exists primarily or solely to serve its members.



Continued on Page 2



God's Vision for Epiphany

Outreach Rationale Continued

The pastor is to be the congregation's private chaplain. There are no ministries designed to meet the particular needs of the congregation's neighbors. If there are outreach ministries, they are the collection of food and clothing for drop-off centers far from the congregation's front door.

Quoting the research from another study, Klaas reports the result of a survey of 4,371 lay people and 886 pastors. Those participating in the survey were asked to rank 15 congregational ministries in order of importance. Ninety-nine percent of the laity and 94% of the pastors did not place evangelism in the top six ministry emphasis for a congregation. Shocked by these numbers, the survey changed the word "evangelism" to "receiving new members." Seventy percent of the laity and 58% of the clergy did not put "receiving new members" in their top six ministries.

If 80% of a congregation's membership believes that a congregation's purpose is to serve its members, and if lay members and clergy do not think evangelism should be a top priority, then it should not surprise anyone that 80% of a congregation's neighbors do not know of its existence or cannot answer simple questions about that congregation.

In the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, a new church model called the Emerging Church challenged the inward focus of the congregations cited in the studies above. This model was built upon the theology that congregations are to be a source of hope and service to their neighbors. Emerging Church congregations celebrate the spiritual gifts of their members by empowering them to implement ministry for which their members have a passion. These ministries are for those who live across the street and to those in far flung places in the world. The Emerging Church is where church growth is today.

Epiphany is well aware of the importance of outreach to its neighbors and the world if it wants to be a healthy and vital congregation. Epiphany already has many of the characteristics of the Emerging Church. In 2011, Epiphany has 42 separate ministries in its outreach portfolio. These are: 10 different community and twelve-step groups use Epiphany's building free of charge, 21 ministries are specifically designed to meet needs in Centerville and the surrounding areas, 6 ministries maintain partnerships with other expressions of the church, and 5 ministries work with church-related organizations. In its vision, these and new ministries will serve those outside the membership of Epiphany Lutheran Church.

Many congregations that have ministries to their neighbors such as letting twelve-step groups use their building do not attempt to invite participants in these groups to other church ministries. Outreach ministries, in these congregations, stand as islands unto themselves.

Epiphany's vision calls for intentional planning to invite and welcome the recipient of a ministry to other church programs such as support and fellowship groups, ministries that center on a task such as building a Habitat House, a study group, and of course worship.

Finally, it is not a secret that Epiphany had a traumatic experience when six staff members and approximately 300 disciples left to form a North American Lutheran Congregation. Seven months after that exodus, Epiphany is not only surviving; it is emerging into a new future. A significant part of the reason that Epiphany is viable today is because of the outreach ministries that serve the disciples at Epiphany and the greater Dayton area.



EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH

6430 Far Hills Avenue
Dayton, OH 45459
www.EpiphanyLutheran.us