

Church Growth Consultation

From a Deacon's Point of View

Memorial Church of Christ in west Houston hired Scott Franks from Oklahoma to do an overall consultation on the congregation in the Fall of 2007. Memorial is one of the larger congregations in the area, so everything said about Memorial may not apply to all congregations. Some will, and all points may give you insight to your congregation.

Areas to be discussed are only areas which tend to impact Deacon's work. If a broader overview is of interest to you, Scott may be of assistance to your congregation also.

Many of his suggestions would be what you would think, including:

Greeters:

- Send all your greeters to visit some other church.
- Including greeting time in your worship services
- Pay attention who parks in guest parking, proactive attention. Greeting can begin in the parking lot.
- Equip greeters with markable maps of the campus
- Train your class hosts

Involvement

- "There seems to be a desire to get more hands-on in the church in a literal way."
- "I'd recommend holding some sort of workday a couple times a year where your people could do something to clean, repair, or renovate the church building. This is not major, but it would foster a sense of involvement and ownership."

Hire an outreach minister—a rule of thumb in church work is one minister for every 150 members.

The largest age group of living in the area is "Survivors" - age 26 to 46, 34.9%. This was a surprise in that we as a group characterized our area as being much older. The largest lifestyle diversity group is "Educated new starters" at 22.6%. Subsequent discussions have confirmed his numbers. This one awakening was easily worth the report.

Signs are too small. Existing members do not need signs, so signs are not for existing members. Scott recommended larger and better signs inside and outside.



THE CHRISTIAN ARRAY

DEDICATED TO SUSTAINED SCRIPTURAL CHURCH GROWTH

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A very interesting point was his description of our services:

Sunday morning class: we go there to fellowship, to sing and praise, to teach the Bible, to pray, and to communicate announcements. It's something we want everyone to participate in.

Sunday morning worship: we go there to fellowship, to sing and praise, to teach the Bible, to pray, to communicate announcements, to share communion and gather the offering. It's something we want everyone to participate in

Sunday evening worship: we go there to fellowship, to sing and praise, to teach the Bible, to pray, to communicate announcements, and to give communion to the people who missed the morning. It's something we want everyone to participate in.

Wednesday evening worship or class: we go there to fellowship, to sing and praise, to teach the Bible, to pray, and to communicate announcements. It's something we want everyone to participate in.

Too many churches have their people stuck in classrooms and groups so often that they have not time left for ministry. A starting point would be to have Wednesday Service Night instead of Wednesday Night Service. Groups could get together and do service work rather than hearing one more Bible lesson.

He probably didn't have to think that up on the spot. It probably applies to most congregations. A summary recommendation which Scott made was:

"If you choose to adapt some of my recommendations, or if you choose to pursue other changes in the status quo, regular gatherings with your leadership - ministers, deacons, focus groups, opinion leaders - will be absolutely essential. Broaden the circle and include these people in gatherings that are specifically about assessment, trouble-shooting, and simply refreshing everyone's memory. As Bill Hybels says, vision leaks. You need to constantly remind people that this is why we are doing this, this is why it is necessary, and this is why it is worth it." (Note: he left elders out as he was presumably writing the report to elders. While being true for elders, it is true for all group leaders.)

The most surprising information received was that as we sit presuming that we were in an older neighborhood, it has become a younger neighborhood. The whole dynamic of how a personal evangelism program should operate needs to be revisited.

Every recommendation by Scott including those discussed here were taken positively by the congregation. Some are already implemented and most if not all are in the process of being implemented.

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HOW ARE WE DOING?

The first chart below gives the growth rate of the church nationally, in the State of Texas, and in Harris county. In each case, the church is close to zero growth, whereas the general population is growing at a good pace.

The second chart tries to put it into figures which you can relate to better. In 1980, one in each 181.9 persons you would meet would have been a member of the church, in 2008 only one person in each 236.5 persons you meet are likely to be a member of the church. The same decline is seen statewide and in Harris county.

MARKET PENETRATION				ANNUAL GROWTH RATE
NATIONAL 1980-2008	POPULATION	226,545,805	299,398,484	3.22%
	CHURCHES OF CHRIST	1,245,540	1,265,844	0.16%
TEXAS 1980-2008	POPULATION	14,299,191	23,507,783	6.44%
	CHURCHES OF CHRIST	278,820	284,512	0.20%
HARRIS COUNTY 1990-2007	POPULATION	2,112,049	2,644,285	2.52%
	CHURCHES OF CHRIST	33,931	33,629	-0.09%

MARKET PENETRATION: CITIZENS / MEMBER				ANNUAL GROWTH RATE
NATIONAL 1980-2008	POPULATION	226,545,805	299,398,484	3.22%
	CHURCHES OF CHRIST	1,245,540	1,265,844	0.16%
	MARKET PENETRATION	181.9	236.5	-3.00%
TEXAS 1980-2008	POPULATION	14,299,191	23,507,783	6.44%
	CHURCHES OF CHRIST	278,820	284,512	0.20%
	MARKET PENETRATION	51.3	82.6	-6.11%
HARRIS COUNTY 1990-2007	POPULATION	2,112,049	2,644,285	2.52%
	CHURCHES OF CHRIST	33,931	33,629	-0.09%
	MARKET PENETRATION	62.2	78.6	-2.63%

NEXT MONTH - WHAT HAPPENED?

50 years ago we were one of the fastest growing religious groups. Today we are in decline relative to population and not growing in real numbers. What happened? Did the church change or did the world change around us?

AREA WIDE ACTIVITIES

April 19-20 Impact Garage Sale

May 29 to June 1 Healthy Churches / Working Churches at Oklahoma Christian University

HoustonCofC is a Yahoo group hosted by Steve Sandifer [steve.sandifer@sbcglobal.net] for the purpose of communicating Houston area news among the brethren. It is open to any member of the church at no cost.

GUARANTEED CHURCH GROWTH

If your congregation does the following, BCE Publications guarantees that it will grow.

Poll your congregation three times at 6 months intervals with the following results:

- 50% of the members know who their elder is
- 50% of the members will say that a minister is their friend
- 50% of the members will say that they are uplifted by the song services
- 50% of the men will say that their input is considered before physical decisions are made
- 50% of the members will say they are an important part of the work
- 50% of the members will say they are aware of the goals of the congregation
- 50% of the members will say that they know what their part is in achieving your goals

GUARANTEE: For the first congregation which does this and does not grow by at least 10%, we will send \$1000 to the church related children's home of your choice in your name.

I have never met a person who said that if they did this their church would not grow. If your congregation is not growing, what have you got to lose?

IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION!

This publication continues (since 1991) to make a standing offer of \$100 to the first person who can give any reason (1 or more) as to why atheistic evolution is a better explanation for the universe and/or life than creation by God, The Father of Adam, Abraham, and Jesus; as revealed in the Bible.

We will also give you \$100 if we cannot give you 12 reasons why atheistic evolution is impossible as an explanation for our existence.

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