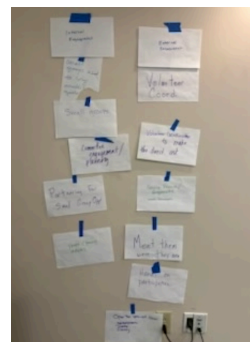


Strategic Planning—From Yawns to Cheers

It's hard to admit a mistake.

When I heard Crestwood was going to establish a strategic plan, my eyes glazed over. I had spent too many years in academia, helping with strategic planning each time the accrediting board was scheduled to visit. We worked hard, never to look at the documents after the pressure was off. Same story, different setting, I thought.

But I was wrong. The ink is hardly dry on the paper and Crestwood is already on the move. I have no intention here to go into details, but I thought it might be helpful to talk a little more about what is happening. I was involved in some of the meetings, but I was still unclear about how things would unfold going forward. There is no attempt to hide the new plans – it's just hard to explain a complicated plan in simple terms. I may just be adding words to the universe, but here goes...



How it was done: A Faithful Planning committee was formed, with Dr. Laura Bryan heading it up. One of her professional duties and training is strategic planning, so she was a natural! I won't go into the procedures that followed but suffice it to say that everyone attending Crestwood had a chance for input. There was a church-wide questionnaire. Various groups were invited to special meetings to get their input (I got involved through the Bradford-Seekers class). There were larger, church-wide meetings open to everyone, and workshops. Frankly, it was kind of interesting to watch it unfold. At one of the later meetings, groups worked together to categorize things on the wall with sticky tape (I've only seen that done before on TV police shows).

The Document: The basics of the final document were consolidated into a mini-summary that was sent to each Crestwood member via email. We were told to call the office if we wanted the more expanded 6-page version sent to us. You can still get it by calling the office. The final plan was presented to the Elders and approved by the Administrative Board. We were off and running!

What we are about: The final result was a succinct document that outlines our church's key values: Values of Welcoming, Authenticity, Generosity, Engagement, Curiosity, and Commitment to Outreach. Each value has a brief explanation as to what it means.

There is also a Mission Statement that was slightly tweaked that now reads: "Connecting people to God and each other by welcoming and accepting everyone; helping them grow in their faith; and empowering them to serve God by serving others."

Where we are going: There are four Strategies to get us where we want to go. Each strategy has a number of goals to aim for. The strategies involve *Internal Engagement* (how we help one another), *External Engagement* (getting our members more involved in community and world outreach efforts), *Telling Our Story* (which is really about communication) and *Being Intentionally Inclusive* (finding ways to reduce barriers to church participation and becoming a more welcoming congregation).

Of course, I have said nothing here that isn't stated in the document, but I still didn't understand clearly how we were getting to those goals. So, I met with Kory over coffee. It seems implementation of the plan is already well on its way.

The staff has the role of being the Implementation Team. They have already had two retreats and are quickly moving us forward. An example of early action is the arranging with a consultant to evaluate the middle and high school programs.

Exciting things are already happening with the younger adults in the 20+ range, a period when people so often quit going to church until the birth of children start bringing them back. A significant group in that range has formed, getting together regularly at restaurants with Kory for fellowship and meaningful conversation.

I personally am most excited about the proposal of a Volunteer Coordinator. That coordinator was mentioned as facilitator for our involvement both internally and in the community strategies. What a wonderful way to make sure no one at Crestwood is overlooked and all talents are utilized. The problem is money. Whether this becomes a paid position or a volunteer one depends on the upcoming Stewardship Campaign, according to Kory. Clearly, a person in a paid position would have more time and more focus to do the many tasks this job could take on. Appropriately, this year's Stewardship Campaign is called "Dreaming Forward."

There are more things already happening, but happily there are so many that there is not room to discuss all of them here. We have some exciting times at Crestwood ahead.

If there is some area of the church you would like to know more about, contact me, Gaye Holman at gdholman@bellsouth.net. Let's explore together.

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