Future Forward Team Meeting

Saturday, May 5, 2018

In attendance: Pastor Lee Kricher; Tom, Sandy, and Olivia Smythe; Jaime, Tori, and Taby Hogan; Amy Dunmire; Janis Hill; Terra Kardos; Sandy Rubright; Pastor Jim

What does this church mean to you?

* This is my family and I want my family to grow
* When I’m not at church, I’m not happy.
* I am accepted and not judged here
* I’m a fifth-generation member of this church. I want my children and grandchildren to be a part of this.
* I’ve grown in my faith since joining this church
* They’ve always been there to support me
* We’re making a real difference in our community

Concerns raised from Future Forward team regarding FELC

* Our average age is declining, but so is our attendance
* We work so hard and people don’t come to worship (or activities)
* Everyone is busy with little league sports and activities. I love my church, but I can’t always be there.
* I got mud on my shoes walking in from the parking lot
* How do we get people who come to events and the clothing closet to come with us to worship?
* People don’t know who we are outside of Leechburg
* My (younger) generation doesn’t like church. They’re more focused on video games and electronic devices.
* I’m afraid that if we change too much, we’ll lose people.
* New ideas are met with skepticism or resistance from other church members.
* Pastor Kricher: “if the church isn’t changing as fast as the world outside of it is changing, the church is dying.”

Pastor Kricher asked: who were the people who quit coming to church?

* A family who used to be very active stopped coming. When a family member asked them why they stopped attending, they said, “I can pray at home” and “the way the church has become is not the way it should be.”
* Nobody reached out to them. Nobody even knew their names. They were known vaguely as “that young couple” or “the blonde gal.”
* Several families stopped coming over objections to how we are stewarding the Kipp estate.
* At Amplify, nearly a third of the core members left the church when they began making major changes. But—increases in participation more than offset their absence.

Action steps taken at Amplify to revitalize the mission

* The formation of a guiding coalition that will make recommendations to the church board
* Shift in mindset from “if it’s good enough for me, it’s good enough for the children” to “what will it take to reach the new generation?”
* Creating an irresistible atmosphere in worship: “Get people excited enough about worship that they invite people and choose to miss out on other things.”
* All ministry is concentrated on three core building blocks:
  + Sunday morning worship experience
  + Ministry to children and youth
  + Formation of small groups for adults
* Younger members with social media savvy were recruited to create and maintain a social media presence
  + Facebook – brings in the adults and the money
  + Instagram – brings in the youth

Action steps we have taken already:

1. Renovation of parlor area for GriefShare and Bible Study to create a comfortable, home-like atmosphere
2. Striving towards weekly coffee hour fellowships
3. Seating area in the rotunda for families with young children to participate in worship.

Action steps we are taking:

* Incorporating upbeat and new styles of music into the liturgy. This summer, we will be having themed music Sundays, which will include southern Gospel, contemporary hymns, and the With One Voice hymnal.
* A youth Sunday still needs to be scheduled.
* An ice cream social is scheduled for Father’s Day.
* The creation of a church logo, tagline, and a new T-shirt. The Future Forward team will be sponsoring a day where we will tie-dye the T-shirts. The congregation will vote on their favorite logo and tagline.
* New signage for the vestibule and Main Street marquis

Action steps for future, to be led by the Future Forward team:

* Cleaning up the landscaping around the church and planting sunflowers
* Creation of a FELC Instagram page, to be administered by youth and supervised by pastor
* Podcasting sermons
* Youth bonfire during the summer; purchasing an annual movie night license for the children
* Purchasing Google Ad Space
* How do we reconnect with persons who’ve been absent in meaningful and compassionate ways?