

# Re-Thinking Church!

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# Life Cycle

- ▶ Birth
- ▶ Growth
- ▶ Maturity
- ▶ Dying
- ▶ Death

# Congregations

- ▶ Birth—Come into existence
- ▶ Growth
- ▶ Maturity—Many mainline congregations hit pick in 60's
- ▶ Dying—Starting in the 70's
- ▶ ??—Today many are in a crisis

# Why Did The Congregations Grow

- ▶ America had just experienced two World Wars
- ▶ Start of the Baby Boomers and people were looking for Christian spirituality
- ▶ The church was the social place to be for a time
- ▶ A part of the problem we thought this type of growth would continue



# Why are Congregations Dying?

The background of the slide is white with abstract green geometric shapes on the right and bottom edges. These shapes consist of overlapping triangles and polygons in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. The shapes are positioned on the right side and bottom, creating a modern, graphic look.

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- ▶ Inward Focused
- ▶ Young People not interested
- ▶ Sermons do not connect

# The Church

- ▶ The church is a community called to proclaim and live out faithfully what it means to be a sign and instrument of the KOG
- ▶ The church does this by being the very presence of the KOG
- ▶ The church does this because it follows the guidance of the H.S.

# Missional Church

- ▶ Is outward focused and not inward focused
- ▶ Continues to invite others to experience the KOG
- ▶ Makes sure the community creates a space for people to experience the KOG
- ▶ There is a difference between a missional church and a church doing mission

# What is your Church's Mission

- ▶ Is it inward or outward focused?
- ▶ How do the ministries of the church connect to the mission?
- ▶ How do you evaluate the way your church is living out its mission—God's mission?

# Seven Characteristics for Resurrection— Lazarus Text (John 11)

## ▶ Prayer

- ▶ Sisters send for Jesus
- ▶ Communicate with the one who has the ability to transform their situation
- ▶ They realize they cannot change the circumstances by human effort
- ▶ We cannot change our congregations by human effort
- ▶ We have to be intentional about praying

# Seven Characteristics

## ▶ Discernment

- ▶ Jesus tells the disciples Lazarus is asleep and must be awoken
- ▶ The disciples do not discern the meaning of Jesus' words
- ▶ As a community we have to discern what God is telling us
- ▶ This requires a lot of praying and dialogue
- ▶ Sometimes outsiders can help us to see things we do not see

# Seven Characteristics

## ▶ Stop Blaming

- ▶ Both Mary and Martha say, “If you had been here Lazarus would not have died!”
- ▶ Jesus is the reason that Lazarus is not alive
- ▶ The reason we are not growing is the neighborhood changed
- ▶ The reason we are not growing is the big church down the street
- ▶ When things are not going well it is easy to spread blame
- ▶ We cannot lose sight of God’s calling

# Seven Characteristics

## ▶ Faith

- ▶ Jesus' response to Martha is do you believe? Do you have faith?
- ▶ Jesus tells her Lazarus will live
- ▶ Faith is grounded in hope, but it is not a wishing
- ▶ It is a realization that God has a plan for our congregation if we are willing to participate in bringing it to fruition
- ▶ We have to embody that reality even when we do not see the fruits immediately

# Seven Characteristics

## ▶ Open the Doors

- ▶ Jesus had the people to roll the stone way
- ▶ Jesus does not move the stone himself
- ▶ You can't go outside of the church and people cannot get in metaphorically speaking when a stone is over the door
- ▶ Martha tells Jesus if he removes the stone there will be an odor (keep it all inside)
- ▶ Are we afraid of removing the stone in front of our doors because of what people may see (keep it inside)?

# Seven Characteristics

## ▶ Called Out

- ▶ If we are praying and discerning—God is going to call us out!
- ▶ Jesus does not go in and get Lazarus, but tells Lazarus to come out
- ▶ Lazarus does not get a chance to get pretty, but comes out bandages and all
- ▶ This means we cannot get stuck on what we want for the church, but must listen for God's call!

# Seven Characteristics

## ▶ Vital Signs

- ▶ Jesus tells the people to take the linens off of Lazarus because he is no longer in the grave
- ▶ Stop acting dead—alive
- ▶ We do not know how long he lives
- ▶ There is no report that he goes back to his younger years
- ▶ Lazarus is walking into a new future
- ▶ Our congregations have to stop trying to move backwards and move forward toward a new future

# Seven Characteristics of Thriving Congregations

- ▶ Prayer
- ▶ Discernment
- ▶ Stop Blaming
- ▶ Faith
- ▶ Open the Doors
- ▶ Called Out
- ▶ Vital Signs

# Where is your congregation?

- ▶ Is your congregation intentional about prayer? If so how? If not, what can you begin to do?
- ▶ How does your congregation discern God's will? How can you do this better?
- ▶ How is your congregation expressing corporate faith? What is it that the congregation embodies?
- ▶ Where is the congregation pointing the fingers at others? How can you move forward in a way that is healthy?
- ▶ Are the doors of the congregation metaphorically closed? What is the fear in rolling the stone away?
- ▶ How is God calling the congregation out?
- ▶ Are there places your congregation can take off the linens of death?

# Willingness to Change

- ▶ Not do things the way you have always done them
- ▶ This is true for resurrecting congregations or for them continuing to thrive
- ▶ We do not own the church
- ▶ The church is not a building
- ▶ Not change for the sake of change

# Practices for Reaching Out

- ▶ Most of us get the importance of greeters
- ▶ Most of us get the importance of being friendly
- ▶ Do we get the idea that hospitality in a church means creating a space where someone can experience God?
  - ▶ This means thinking deeply about every event we invite others to attend whether it is inward or outward focused
  - ▶ This means helping them to connect their story to the church's story and ultimately to God's story

# Practices for

## ▶ Sermons

- ▶ How is your preaching making a difference for the way individuals understand their lives, church's story and God's story?
- ▶ How is your preaching invitational to those who dis-remembered God's story or never knew it?
- ▶ How do you invite conversation about your sermons?
  - ▶ Email
  - ▶ Facebook
  - ▶ Bible Study

# Practices for

- ▶ Spiritual Friend

- ▶ Someone to help integrate them into the congregation
- ▶ Someone to help them find their place in God's narrative and the church's narrative