

Northside Drive Baptist Church
Church Council Minutes
Monday, March 10, 2008

BUSINESS

Minutes: The minutes of the February 11, 2008 Church Council meeting were approved as presented.

Treasurer's Report: Carolyn fielded questions from the financial report that she provided for us.

Nominating Report: Syd reported that Letty Konenkamp is filling as the interim treasurer while the Nominating Committee works at finding someone to be treasurer. The Kellers are moving to Texas so positions on Finance and Diaconate need to be filled to replace them. The Nominating Committee would like all Chairs to give them the names of those folks continuing on their committee. Nominations are needed for Moderator, Personnel Committee, Finance and Diaconate. If anyone is having trouble filling their volunteer committees, please let the Nominating Committee know and they will help out.

Signage Report: Syd reported that Lew Dorrity and Bobbie Baldwin could not longer continue to serve on that committee. The Maddox fund approved \$36,000 towards the signage project.

James reported on addressing the word Hope:

**The Spirituality of Hope and Northside Drive Baptist Church
The Beginning of a Conversation with the Church Council
By James Lamkin, Pastor
March 10, 2008**

Church Council Colleagues:

These are a few of my talking points which I shared with the group on Monday night. The remainder of this initial conversation will happen at our NEXT MEETING on APRIL 7.

Introduction

I want to begin a conversation with you about hope. Hope is a spiritual topic. The Apostle Paul said it is one of the things that will abide. I see hope as a compilation of three things:

- 1—It involves a sense of what could be and can be.
- 2—It requires a sense of what is.
- 3—It has a sense of how to connect “what is” with what “can be.”

Hope and Northside Drive Baptist Church are on mind a great deal. However, specific images of what hope looks like—what images the “could be” and “can be”

takes, seem to allude me. I've wanted to talk with you about this, and yet I've felt my thinking to be too green to offer. But I've changed my mind. Let's go ahead and begin the conversation. Perhaps you are part of the ripening process.

Why now?

First, I decided that some ideas never ripen until they are brought into the community. Second, on Ash Wednesday I learned some things as I listened to the Personnel Committee as they stated their opinions regarding the state of the church and my relationship to it. Third, I consulted with Don Janney, the Personnel Committee chair, about appropriate follow-up steps. He and I decided that the Church Council would be a potential-filled forum to which I should bring my pastoral observations, hopes, and challenges.

I will be speaking to five issues: 1) What I see, 2) What I suspect, 3) What I will do, 4) What I'd like to see us do, 5) What I'm asking the members of the Church Council to do.

I. This is what I see...

1. I see a bubbling of new life and a lively spirit. Examples of this are:
 - The Green Group that has "sprung up," and is meeting regularly and already giving leadership and direction regarding a theological ecology.
 - The Kids' Night Out. A huge success of giving ourselves to the community.
 - The Seekers' Church School Class that are doing theological studies regarding peace and justice issues while living accountable lives. They are considering sharing Living the Questions to the neighborhood beyond just our church.
 - A supple and responsive mission's community that invests beyond a mission trip—such as providing college scholarships for Taliaferro County.
 - The 20/30 something's that meet at Mike Gregg's house. This was formed by our Minister of Educational Life by recognizing a gap in our ministry.
 - The innovative rotational Children's Sunday School project that involves intergenerational age groups...as in J.B. the giant Muppet.
 - Intimacy as a value of spiritual community has become a way of life for more of our church members
 - There is more creative synergy between The Weekday Preschool and NDBC than ever before. Mike Gregg has worked hard to make this so.
 - Yoga is a wonderful community outreach and spiritual ministry.

2. I see us living out our vision. We have achieved what we envisioned to do.

As we read the vision's words, members faces and ministries come to mind:

We believe God calls us into Christian community with the challenge to discern and act

upon the ongoing revelation of God in our time and place.

We live out this vision by being a church

- rooted deeply in liturgical traditions,
- where intergenerational friendships are valued,
- all members can be known by name,
- open-mindedness is the basis of spiritual formation,
- resources are shared generously,
- and where hands-on service is crucial to our own discipleship and the mission of Christ in the world.

We celebrate this vision through

- the intimacy of a loving congregation,
- the strength of Baptist freedoms,
- and the reach of an ecumenical and inclusive spirit.

3. I see grief and fear. We not only experience the evolution of life, our reaction often is fear and grief.

--As we watch aging congregants.

--As some fear financial crisis when financial givers of large amounts die.

--As members depart, moving into new ministries and into retirement like the Kellers and the Dorritys.

--As we evaluate our congregation by comparing it to the other churches nearby.

--As some believe that the image they believed that the church had, is no longer.

--As our structure evolves, some of its form is passing away and we don't yet know what will take its place. What forms feel as burdensome as Saul's armor, and what is as supple as David's slingshot?

--When I met with the Personnel Committee on Ash Wednesday, I heard them expressing grief regarding the state of the church and fear; also I heard disappointment in my pastoral leadership.

II. This is what I suspect...a tale of two trajectories.

1. Steady as she goes. I suspect the church will have a good future if we do nothing but continue to serve, pray, worship, love, and do Christian education.

The numbers may get worse before better. However, I think resurgence will come as a gift from God. Plus, according to the Christian Faith, death is one way God gives new life. However, even a “steady as she goes” approach, will have unexpected times of “punctuated equilibrium.” For instance, Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, TX, has been known as a wonderfully progressive, liturgical church; and yet, the church is now splitting due to chronic anxiety that found the symptom of gay couples in the pictorial directory to focus on. The case study reminds of how hard it is to be a progressive church.

2. Intentional and interventional. Here a leadership group, such as the church council, would do as W.C. Fields put it, “Sometimes you have to take the bull by the tail and face the situation!” The leadership group would get clear about some directional experiments and lead the church to try these approaches. As resistance would come, the group would non-anxiously take strong, but attentive stands.

(Due to time and lively discussion, I did not get to the following points. I will address these at our next gathering.)

III. This is what I will do...

IV. This is what I would like to see us do...

V. This is what I ask that you do...

Mike reported on the dinners for dreaming:

**Dinners for Dreaming 2007
Summary and Report
Northside Drive Baptist Church**

PURPOSE

Dinners for Dreaming is an event serving three (3) purposes:

1. The first purpose is to help me get to know the different age groups in the church in an informal way. In essence, these meetings were more for my information and understanding of Northside Drive Baptist Church. I feel that this is the most important reason for organizing such an event. It would be unlikely to have all of these groups together at one time in any other setting and I want to know how to serve Northside Drive.

2. The second is for each age group in the church to feel heard as they bring who they are to this event. I want to really

listen and hold close to my spirit the dreams, fears, hopes, and anxieties of the congregation.

3. The third purpose is to utilize the information I hear from the age group dinners to better plan events for, minister to, and dream in to the future for Northside Drive Baptist Church.

INFORMATION

Young Adults

1. Write down one word to describe Northside Drive Baptist Church. Why did you write that word?

Intelligent

Warm and Intellectual. I find it comforting and mentally challenging

Peaceful - I love the service, it invokes peace within me

Welcoming - That's how we knew NDBC was for us.

Familial, very small open congregation with great relationships among all parishioners

Open minded and with open hearts

Anxious, anticipation

2. What has been the best activity or most exciting moment in which you have participated with young adults at Northside Drive Baptist Church?

Italy trip that included the Clarks

Sunday School - Trip to Italy

The Couples Sunday School Class - great friends and camaraderie.

Sunday School Class Parties

Mission Trip to Halfway House in Midtown

Anything intergenerational

We like parties and ways we can hang out and bond with each other

Valentines Day Brunch

Lay Groups - get those structured

Men's Night Out - or a men's retreat

3. What is one challenge that you have seen regarding our ministry to young adults at Northside Drive Baptist Church?

Attracting more young adults
Marketing to Young Adults and Serving on Marketing Committee
Numbers - not enough in any one group
Competition of the "mega-church" - being what more young adults flock towards for worship. But its that same reason we loved NDBC because it was a more traditional service.
Hard to generate widespread attendance
We are not a neighborhood church anymore
It is a challenge to be competing with the mega-church and not have contemporary worship.
We need to do less but more impacting
Educate people on what a Baptist is since it is on our sign
We only want to volunteer for specific events, and not do long term volunteering
We don't like serving on committees
We don't have time to do the work right now but if the church becomes what we want it to be then we will participate more.

4. What are your dreams for the future of the young adult ministry at Northside Drive Baptist Church?

A close group, possibly larger that everyone is excited to be a part of. Enriching and intellectually stimulating Sunday School.
Bring more young adults in
Larger class and those devoted to coming to Sunday School
Church Softball team
Continue to develop deep relationships and develop groups without getting too big.
We need opportunities at night for working folks, Saturdays
Athletics, Recreation, Softball Team

Youth

1. Write down one word to describe Northside Drive Baptist Church. Why did you write that word?

Community, Family
Community - place to be with friends
Missions
Family in good and bad- a support
Freedom to explore God
Diversity, private and public
Open-minded
Refuge- a safe place

2. What has been the best activity or most exciting moment in which you have participated with youth at Northside Drive Baptist Church?

Whirley Ball
Youth Sunday - sermons and participation
New York City Trip
In depth discussion time
Lock - in, whiffle ball
Worship Exchange
Retreats
Going to Jimmy Carter's Sunday School Class
Hiking Trips
Ski-Trip

3. What is one challenge that you have seen regarding our ministry to youth at Northside Drive Baptist Church?

Older kids have left
Critical Mass is low
We need to figure out ways to encourage families to get youth to come
Church wide concern of no kids
How to get parents involved?

4. What are your dreams for the future of the youth ministry at Northside Drive Baptist Church?

Braves Games
Get youth to invite friends
Get a part-time youth director
Renovate facilities
Worship with other churches
Youth need a place to call their own
Qualities of Youth Director

- sense of humor
- energetic
- theologically sound
- disciplinarian
- good with relationships
- have relationships with kids outside of church

Youth need ownership in activities
Renovation of youth area - game room. We need people to donate games

Middle to Older Adults

1. Write down one word to describe Northside Drive Baptist Church. Why did you write that word?

Family - They have been our Atlanta family and helped raise our kids.

Gracious, hospitable, generous in spirit, caring, adventurous, ecumenical

Wonderful - I think it is a wonderful church

Friendly

Family - I wrote "family" because I can't spell "sanctimonious"

Warmth, love, friendship and caring church

Liturgical - Distinguishes ourselves from other Baptist

Congregations

Uniqueness of Formal Worship

Relationship to God is structured

It is the family I chose

Warmth, friendliness, love, happiness

Subdued, sacred, sense of humor

Freedom, liturgical, mission, inclusive

Spectators, observe more than create

Laid-back, enigma

2. What has been the best activity or most exciting moment in which you have participated with middle to older adults at Northside Drive Baptist Church?

The women's spiritual retreat

Certain times of music

Young couples class

friendships

Women's Retreat

Salute to High School Seniors

Every 11:00am worship service

We chaperoned two choir trips to Europe in 1982 and 1984

My Sunday School Class

Got married in the sanctuary

Choir Retreats in 70's and 80's (away from Atlanta). Work and fun at the same time.

Feast of Carols - Full church, Advent season, all ages

The Sanctuary, it looks like a church

Sunday School, intergenerational

Call people by name

Mission Trips

Women in Leadership, Prayer

Ordination of Deacons
Express Praise
Communion at the rail

3. What is one challenge that you have seen regarding our ministry to middle and older adults at Northside Drive Baptist Church?

Get in touch with folks who have not come in a while
Retain our Baptist identity
We want to retain what we like but we have to do things differently.
We might need to do things we don't want to do
Not enough people for certain events, usually for kids and youth
Attracting new members
Staying true to spiritual differences between the church and the world
Building the current sanctuary we now have
I hope we will be able to get enough new members to survive as a church
Membership
Filling up the sanctuary
Get over the idea that we need to do everything for children, we adults need stuff too.
Sufficient Membership to support the programs we want
We cop-out about wanting new members but not wanting to change

4. What are your dreams for the future of the middle to older adult ministry at Northside Drive Baptist Church?

To last; to continue to be a beacon of study and kindness, of open mindedness, tolerance, and service to others; to raise more kids with the guidance and support mine received.
To be marketed as the inclusive, broad-minded, thoughtful Baptist church.
Men's retreat as meaningful as women's retreat
Young Adult theological discussion group
Use the chapel more for worship services in between seasons
Hot-air Balloon or skywriting plane on Sunday morning to announce church
New Member follow-up never left incomplete

- deacon assignment
- follow-up gift inventory undertaken with each family member and assignment of tasks at church
- 3 month assessment of members

Visitors from church families always followed up with upon visits
New signage of unique nature signaling what goes on within the church walls
Camping for family groups or young adults
Borrow campground for church-wide retreat
Vibrant, Active Church
Get a bunch of young people to join
Grow but maintain warmth and closeness of people
Sufficient critical mass to support mission and music and education programs for more local congregation.
Children's music program and choir
Let's keep the same substance but change the style
It is like a small business, we can't compete with the prices or programs but we can win folks with customer service.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

This report is filled with anxiety. This anxiety is fueled by two very prominent emotions, fear and hope. I feel that both of these emotions have a foundation in the past and an eye to the future. The sense of hope is from a love and passion for the church that comes from a rich history of Northside Drive members being a family for each other. Yet, that remembering of the past also brings up feelings of frustration and fear, as the church does not have as many members as years past.

The same is true of the future. The future brings with it the hope of a new wind and new spirit to blow the church into it's next 50 years. However, fear also clouds the future as the thought of our aging building and congregation raises concerns of inadequate attendance and monetary giving. So the hope and fear in the past and the future are mingling together and it appears from these meetings that the fearful anxiety for the future of the church is starting to be the predominate feeling of congregation members.

I have decided to challenge the congregation to not let their hurt, confusion, frustration, and apathy call the shots regarding the church's future. Also, I want to offer my leadership to the church by offering innovative opportunities, studies, and activities. It is my wish that the congregation will be inspired and choose to be hopeful and to live into and work at their hope. It has been important for me to utilize the comments I heard from the Dinners for Dreaming to spark life, create programming, develop leadership, give direction, and to

do it in a way that has the potential of spawning hope and empowerment.

Young Adults

Main Observation

The important comments made at the Young Adult Dinners for Dreaming were that parents want other kids with which their children can play. They want good facilities, quality programming, more summer programming, and regular childcare. However, the consensus of the young adult group was that they feel they are too busy and do not want to volunteer and give of themselves in order to get the children's programming to the next level. They did say that they would bring their kids more often once the programming and facilities were to the high quality they desire.

Leadership Response

Upon hearing this particular response from the Young Families group, I decided to begin a group for singles and couples in their 20's and 30's without kids. This group of young adults needs to be a visible and involved as the Middle to Senior Adults. This particular method of gaining children and families into the church will take more time, as these young adults do not have children yet. Hopefully, once they do have children, they will be committed to and responsible for the family programming and children's ministries of Northside Drive. The NDBC 20/30 community group meets monthly for dinner and conversation. We also meet regularly for special events (game night, Super Bowl, etc).

It appears that the most effort being given to the Children's Ministry at Northside Drive Baptist Church is through the Children's Committee. Virginia Gilbert and Susan Harlan have designed and implemented the Workshop Rotation Model for Church School and have tripled the regular Sunday School class size. Also, Virginia Gilbert, the Children's Committee and I implemented a trial program called Kids' Night Out to allow parents the opportunity to have inexpensive childcare while their kids play with each other at church. The children became friends and the program's banner attracted families from the neighborhood. The young singles and couples, as well as the Children's Committee, are taking the initiative from the families as a result of information gleaned from the Young Adult Dinners for Dreaming session.

Youth

Main Observation

It appeared that the youth parents and youth leaders had a lot of anxiety over the number of students in the youth program. There was also frustration with parents not bringing their youth to church because of the lack of youth currently involved. However, much of the conversation was hopeful in that a new youth director would help guide the youth program and help the youth build stronger relationships with each other and the church.

Leadership Response

The church hired Eric Cain to organize, grow and cultivate the youth program. He understands the anxiety about the number of youth who attend church. He has provided enthusiasm and initiative to the youth ministry.

Middle to Senior Adults

Main Observation

It appeared that the overarching question for the session was "Why are we not growing like other churches?" These comments pushed the conversation to what other churches are doing and ultimately what we are not doing. The focus was "out there" rather than "in here" and what God is calling us to do.

Everyone was in agreement that Northside Drive is declining in attendance and numbers despite its strong and beautiful history. An observation made by a number of folks at the session was that we value our history and don't want to change, but that the only way the church will survive is if we do change. This tension in institutional heritage and cultural relevance is frustrating and intricate. It is one that needs to be explored.

Leadership Response

In order to see what other churches are doing in our area as well as what our calling is in the middle of this community, James and I have proposed a plan over the next 2 years to research other churches, report to the church the findings, explore what the findings mean for our community and Northside Drive, and boldly live out the results. James and I will take the initiative to organize and implement the research. We might find that other churches in the area have the same struggles and fearful anxieties that we do.

An example of a response to our call for institutional uniqueness has been the flowering of a Green Group committed to making Northside Drive a sustainable church. Not only will Northside Drive educate its members to be more environmentally conscious, but the actions taken will be a marketing tool for the church. The church's environmental efforts will set us apart and give us a mission that other churches in the area do not possess.

CLOSING COMMENTS

It is important to realize that I am new to the history of Northside Drive Baptist Church and that I have yet realize all of the anxieties and hopes of the institutional identity. In my previous experiences using the Dinners for Dreaming model I have found that it is common for the first session to birth a great amount of venting frustration by church members. These feelings are part of who and what the church is right now. The church's report to me in the Dinners for Dreaming session was that "you want to voice your anxiety and tell me about the impossible task of growing a church with financial challenges, declining attendance, and an aging facility." That is a harsh assessment but one that I think is accurate. It is also incomplete. I think hope and promise represent the church and who the church is becoming. We are on the edge of an intense movement of God in this wonderfully unique community called Northside Drive Baptist Church. I see much to be hopeful about rather than fearful.

In conclusion, this process has helped me to better implement and organize ministries and programming that will lower the fearful anxiety, inspire church growth, and build excitement. I feel many of the programs and ideas that have been previously discussed in this report and have been implemented over the past several months have done just that. This report could keep us stuck in the fearful anxiety of the questions. Or, it can help us respond to the questions with honesty, vigor, imagination, and hope.

Rev. Michael L. Gregg

Mike suggested reading *Reaching People Under 40 While Keeping People Over 60, Being Church To All People.*

Communication:

The Marketing, Technology, Communication and Membership Development Committees are looking at ways to package our church in a more contemporary manner. Examples: redo the logo, update our website and update our signage.

Announcement:

Our next meeting is changed to April 7, 2008 due to James being out of town on the 14th.

Round table.

Adjournment.

Respectfully submitted by
Kay Braswell, Church Clerk