

September 24, 2013

Issue 3



GROW the VISION

A Publication of the Community Covenant Church Stewardship Campaign

Have you ever heard the fable about the villagers who each agreed to contribute a sack of grain for those of their neighborhood who were needy? A large vat was placed in the village square where the sacks of grain were to be emptied. The day appointed for the opening arrived. The villagers assembled. The vat cover was lifted. It was empty. Each villager, thinking, "my grain will not be missed," had failed to respond.

WHY WE NEED TO DO THIS NOW!

As the Stewardship Campaign starts to ramp up and members are asked to pray about the future of our church and how we may best determine and act on God's will, there are some thoughts that I wanted to propose to you. We NEED a youth minister now! We are finally in a position as a church and a congregation where this makes sense. I feel that before now much of our desire for a "youth minister" was a wistful summer dream based on the "good old days" that we remember from our own youth. This had absolutely NO bearing on whether as a church we were ready to accept the spiritual, financial, and ministerial responsibilities of providing for our youth.

The demographics of a church shift and change over time. If you don't believe that this is true, just ask some of our "old timers". We now have multigenerational families in our church (I can think of two without raising a sweat) which encompass at least four generations. Have you noticed how full the nursery and toddler room is? Do you have any idea how many are in the young people's small group? These young people grew up in our church with a consistent youth minister and are still here in this church in their twenties and thirties. This goes against a national trend in which young people leave their home church after high school and generally don't come back.

Consistency is needed with parenting and, just as importantly, is needed in the church with the raising up of the next generation of Christians. A quick glance at the news (whether television, newspaper, or computer) reveals that there isn't much that stays the same on a daily basis. How can our young people expect to find an everlasting TRUTH if we as parents and Christian leaders don't provide the guidance that is needed. Consistent discipleship is not only needed but MUST be provided by the Body of Christ. As it says in Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go and even when he is old he will not depart from it".

Why wouldn't we want to invest in our youth? These are either our next generational leaders in the church and the community OR they're gone, they're history and they're outta here! If you were a new person with a family walking through the church's door for the first time and you have 2.5 children, regardless of the age, are you REALLY going to stick around if you think there is nothing at this church for your kids? As the old saying goes, water seeks its own level. Young people draw young people. It's simple as that! Young people come when they perceive that there is something for them also. That's the cold, hard fact.

Another consideration is that children that are raised with consistent leadership in the church act as missionaries to their family and friends. They provide a light to unsaved families and friends. What is a more powerful statement than having a young Christian leader come out to the car to say hello to an unsaved parent while their child has been enjoying fellowship in a church? Gee, maybe not all Christians are legalistic, insensitive, Bible thumpers! That, folks, is how seeds are planted.

One last thought... Stagnant water is ugly and I dare say stagnant belief is unbiblical. The need for a youth minister or young adult and youth pastor (or whatever you want to call him or her) is NOW! We need to do this NOW! One of my favorite movies of all time (next, of course, to *The Godfather*) is *The Shawshank Redemption*. One of the lines that the character "Red" said stays in my mind: "Get busy living or get busy dying". We need to get busy providing for our youth for our continued life as the People of God. The consequences of ignoring this eventually leads to the death of the church in one form or another.

In Christ,
John Miltner

FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Jen Ambroceo lives with her husband and daughter in East Bridgewater. They first were introduced to Community Covenant Church 4 years ago when their baby girl was born and the ladies from Welcome Baby brought her a basket. She and her husband Scott started attending soon after that and have been consistently attending for a few years. She told me that she loves that there are kids her daughter's age and their age! She and Scott are really enjoying the small group that they are in. Jen hasn't always felt the same way about church that she does now. She grew up moving around a lot and she didn't have a positive view of church. She always believed there was a God, but thought because she was a good person that she was going to heaven. She never had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ or attended church with any regularity.

This is where it gets awesome, and a little spooky! (insert Twilight Zone music here). Jen received a phone call one day asking her about her application that she submitted to a Christian school and would she be interested in interviewing for a teaching position there. Jen didn't fill out any such application! However, she needed a job so a neighbor (another interesting story) helped her with the faith questions on some paperwork the school required. Jen was hired! She bought a Bible and found herself enjoying and looking forward to the weekly chapel service. She wrote pages of notes and started to read that Bible. Her life started a slow transformation.

Teaching was going well and one student in particular, Emma, was insistent that Jen meet this "guy who hangs around the gas station I go to." Turns out it was a gas station and car repair shop and that guy was Scott Ambroceo, a family friend of Emma's. Scott's dad owns the shop and they were friends with Emma's parents. One day Jen was "tricked" into tagging along with Emma's family to Boston and they did the same to Scott. Well, the two hit it off! They are married and have a daughter who they named Emma, after the student!

There are so many more details and specific instances in Jen's story where it is obvious God was there with her guiding her to this life...too many to include here. She is coming from a perspective of a new faith, so she has a fresh take on things. She is super excited to help out with local missions, her new niche. Jen, Scott, and Emma are proof that Community Covenant Church is touching and reaching out to the community. Jen is willing to share more of her story, because it's so powerful and awesome, please seek her out if you'd like to hear more.

PRAYER



When we pray, we are re-entering into our relationship with God! It is important to be diligent in prayer, in order to determine His will in the matter and call His will into existence in our petitions. Every decision in Jesus' life was covered in prayer. Even the disciples who walked with Jesus daily knew they did not have what He had in terms of communication with the Father. Each one of us must come to a point when we cry out to God, "Lord, teach us to pray." Learning to pray begins by making a choice to be alone with Him. When we spend time with the Lord, something wonderful happens. God wants us to rest in His love as we come away with Him in prayer. Your prayers will begin to reflect the heart and mind and Word of the Lord.

As we lift up our voices joining together to the Lord in prayer, asking for His will to be done here at Community Covenant, we can be confident that He cares and will answer our petitions. Let us gladly commit to God our whole heart's desire for our Church and trust that He will answer us with His best of blessings. God can remove any obstacles to fulfill His mission as we pray in unity and faith for the future of our church seeking God's will. When we invest in God's will here on earth, we will be establishing a "savings account" in heaven.

Will you continue to commit every day to a "**unified prayer time**" at either 8:30 am or 8:30 pm as we join all together regarding the following petitions?

- That putting God first becomes a priority in each of our lives
- That God will supply all the resources needed to accomplish His will within our church
- A spirit of committed and generous hearts
- That God will bless our 24-hour Vigil with prayer warriors seeking His will for our church family
- A willingness to adjust lifestyles for God's work at Community Covenant
- Youth pastor/Christian mentorship for our children and grandchildren
- Unleashing of the Holy Spirit to reveal God's will and wisdom to the Leaders of our church
- That our unified prayers will be answered seeking God's will
- That God will bless our celebration meal as commitments are made to accomplish God's work at CCC
- That our "mission statement" at CCC will continue to glorify God and promote God's kingdom work here in East Bridgewater and surrounding areas

Let faith be the motivation behind our prayers. In 1 John 5:14 it states: And this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He will hear us.

God is listening to us --- He hears our prayers. We praise and thank him in Jesus' name.



CHALLENGE SUNDAY—SEPTEMBER 29th

Pastor Christopher Ek will be preaching on Challenge Sunday, September 29th. Pastor Ek grew up in the East Bridgewater church, going through Sunday School, Confirmation and Youth Group. He graduated from North Park Seminary in 2001, served two churches in the Chicago area and is now the Senior Pastor at Bethany Covenant Church in Berlin, CT. Chris has been married to his wife Rachele for 8 year and they have two children, Alayna (4) and Ashlyn (1).