

State of the Church

Michael (for the Elders)

13 May 2018

David used to give us a little monthly summary of our giving and finances. I miss those updates.

This morning I want to touch briefly on the “State of our Church”.

If you’re a visitor – I’m sorry! Please bear with us.

In January we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the congregation. Such an occasion calls for a little...

Inventory. Just a look at our directory shows that we’re smaller today than either Central or Southwest or the combined congregation has been, maybe in their entire history. The trend towards smaller is not anything new. Prior to 1983, both Southwest and Central were gradually getting smaller. With the merger, there was of course a boost, but the combined congregation has continued the trend since 1983.

Why? It isn’t any one reason, it’s complicated...

Introspection. is a lot harder than inventory. What is happening to us? What should we keep doing? What should we stop doing?

Some very hard things have been happening to us.

Inundation. Hurricane Harvey is not the only thing that inundated us. The deaths of David, Gene, Betty, Glenda, and Amy have washed over us like a flood. When one of our number passes away, the Body here must adjust, and must manage without their abilities, their wisdom, and their experience.

Injury. The breakups of two of our young families has left a painful wound in the body here. We grieve over these very discouraging events.

Here are some good things that I see in our congregation:

Instruction. We have a heritage with a strong emphasis on the Bible. This

current series on 1 John is timely, refreshing, practical and Biblical. “Do love, and don’t sin.”

Insight. Our group is a big cross section of people. Ethnicity, income, outlook, other differences. When we are not all just the same, doesn’t it make our combined perspective better?

Inclusion. In the 1920s there was a controversy in Churches of Christ. It was “the located preacher”. Now, nearly a hundred years later, we have intentionally moved away from the “one preacher” model. We have a broad base of participation. We have multiple voices encouraging us, through whom, we trust, the Holy Spirit can work. When I hear “both men and women”, working together to build us up in our assemblies, it sounds like Luke’s Gospel, “your Sons and daughters will prophesy...”

Ideals. On some Sundays we have an assembly that looks closer to a “New Testament church” gathering than most

any I have experience with. Is it messy? Can be. Difficult to manage? Somewhat. Quite a bit of the book of 1 Corinthians was written to manage the Love Feast.

Importance. We try to keep our emphasis on the “weightier matters” of the Gospel. Loving God, loving one another. The Kingdom of God in our midst. The work of the Holy Spirit.

Income. What a blessing it is to be where people are so generous with their giving.

Internet. This is just an opportunity to thank those who have worked hard to make our web site better. It is important how we present ourselves, and that brings us to our...

Identity. We’ve worn the name of Southwest Central for nearly 35 years. It has served us pretty well. It has its limitations. (It’s hard to fit it on a check.) Maybe it’s time for a change. What do you think?

Image. We are the Body of Christ. We are supposed to look like Jesus. The way to do that is to live as he lived. Living as Jesus lived – is the very definition of “disciple”.

“Not what I want, but what you want.”

The greatest commandment, and the second one that is like it.

Righteousness and holy living is the “Higher Ground of Life in Christ Jesus our Lord”.

Invitation. We need help. Even though we’re not a big church. Building and Grounds. A few folks help with that – and we’re grateful – and we could use more. Administration. Some of us have skills in that, and others of us -- don’t. Shepherding. Some of you do that already, do it naturally, we can see it. More formal – more recognized – roles for these folks are in order.

Input. Earlier I asked, What should we keep doing? What should we stop doing? What might we start doing? If

you are interested in those things, I would love to talk about them with you.

Imagination. We have brilliant people here. Faithful people here. Our congregation has a lot going for it, and only because of what the Lord does through you.

Well, I have only touched on lot of matters. We hope it is the start of many more conversations. We’ve been having some already.

I’d like to close by reminding us that David’s favorite story in the Old Testament was Gideon. I’d ask everyone to look at it again this week – it’s in Judges chapters 6 and 7. I hope for us to look at that again soon.

Thank you.