The Presbyterian

of The Presbytery of Elizabeth

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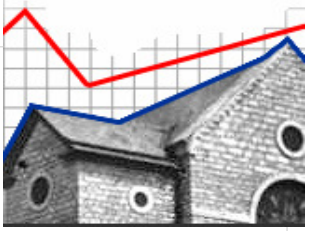
Message from Greg:



I like to give credit where credit is due so let's look at the congregations of The Presbytery of Elizabeth from four points of view.

First, what were the top five congregations in terms of per member giving in 2008? They were Christ ($3,492 per member in comparison to the Presbytery average of $1,171 and the PCUSA average of $1,109), Garwood, New Providence, Siloam-Hope, and Community-Edison.

Second, what were the top five in terms of worship attendance growth from 2002 to 2008? They were First-Bernardsville (56%), First-Cranford, Linden, Community-Edison, and Willow Grove.

Third, what were the top five in terms of total receipts in 2008? They were Central ($2,918,690), Liberty Corner, Westfield, New Providence, and Basking Ridge.

Finally, what were the top five in terms of Presbyterian mission support in 2008? They were Central ($103,000), Westfield, Liberty Corner, Calvin, and Basking Ridge.

All of this information comes from the Presbytery Ten-Year Trend Report which is published annually based on the previous calendar year. What should you do with this data? First, congratulate the leaders and/or members of these congregations (if you know any). Second, find out how your congregation did on these scales and, if you are dissatisfied, contact one of these congregations for help. Why? Because they are doing it right!

Now, please join me in this prayer: *Heavenly Parent, we know that numbers don't say it all but they are indicators of spiritual health so we thank you for the congregations listed here and the ways you are blessing them. Please help all of our congregations to be spiritually healthy in these and other ways, we ask in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

The Rev. Greg Albert, Interim Executive Presbyter
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Hopes for the 219th General Assembly (2010)

Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, has released his greatest hopes for the 219th General Assembly (2010) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to be held in Minneapolis from July 3-10, 2010.

Prayerful decision-making: The spirit in which decisions are made at the assembly will be a prayerful and careful witness of decision-making for the entire church

Deeper awareness of the whole PC(USA): Commissioners and advisory delegates will gain a deeper awareness of the length and breadth of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), realizing they are part of something much larger than themselves.

Issues facing congregations: Commissioners and advisory delegates will discern with the whole church the issues and challenges facing congregations

Common calling to a changing church: A clear, common calling will emerge to actively and hopefully engage with the reality of a church in change.

Attention beyond ourselves: Attention will move beyond ourselves to a world in great need, committing ourselves to gospel work: making disciples, feeding the hungry, welcoming the outcast, encouraging the faint-hearted, working for peace – all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Enthusiastic sharing of the faith: Those who are part of the assembly will be the first in line of Presbyterians to talk about their faith with a contagious enthusiasm.

Furthering the mission of Christ: At the end of the assembly, commissioners and advisory delegates will have a deep sense that what they did will further the mission of Christ in the world.

Count "Touches," not Just Sunday Attendance

Church leaders must learn to count – and value – "touches," as opposed to Sunday attendance.

For example, let's say a congregation averages 200 "fannies in the pews" on Sunday, as one irreverent pastor puts it. Is that its actual size? It depends.

If the congregation has an electronic newsletter, its weekly distribution could grow far beyond 200. One congregation I know has 800 in church on Sunday but 5,000 receiving its weekly e-letter. With a decent e-mail system, such as Constant Contact, you can count how many e-letters were delivered and opened.

If the congregation has a dynamic web site, another several hundred will visit the site with at least some regularity. Your web host keeps statistics on site visitors.

If church groups are dynamic and open, many non-Sunday folks will participate. Same with the church's mission work.

Each of these touches can be counted. In the example of a 200 ASA church, you might count 800 receiving the e-letter, 500 visiting the web site each month, 100 non-members attending groups and missions, for a total of 1,400 touches. Add another 100 to 200 if you have a pre-school.

Add to that, then, the less easily counted but still valuable touches that happen when the pastor talks to neighbors, when people play ball on your property, when they see a community garden on your lawn, and when church members talk about their church at work and at home.

These touches vary in depth and quality, but the impact adds up over time.

The big "ifs," of course, are whether you have what it takes to nurture such touches: an e-letter, a dynamic web site, open groups, strong word of mouth.

Remember this: Jesus called two or three dozen disciples, but he also fed 5,000 and taught many more. Each touch mattered enough to be counted. It was all of those touches, not just the named few, that built the Christian enterprise.

(The above article was written by the Rev. Tom Ehrich, founder of the Church Wellness Project.

219th General Assembly (2010) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
July 3 – July 10, 2010 in Minneapolis MN

Please keep the commissioners from the Presbytery of Elizabeth and other attendees in your prayers as they travel to/from Minnesota to participate in this bi-annual gathering.

Commissioners & YAAD elected by the Presbytery

* Elders: **Wanda Sizemore McRae** (Elizabeth, Siloam-Hope); **Arthur (Skip) Winter, Jr.** (Cranford, First)
* Minister: **Karen Chamis** (Roselle, First); **Charles Hale, Jr.** (Honorably Retired
* Young Adult Advisory Delegate (YAAD): **Tamar VanDerVeer** (Elizabeth Siloam-Hope)

Others making the journey

* Rev. Greg Albert, Interim Executive Presbyter
* Rev. Paul F. Rack, Stated Clerk
* Rev. Victor Aloyo, Jr. (Plainfield, United/Nuevas Fronteras) – Princeton Theological Seminary
* Rev. Neal Presa (Middlesex), Chair of the Special Committee on the Heidelberg Confession
* Rev. Bebb Wheeler Stone (Linden, Calvin) – President of PHEWA
* Rev. Shannan Vance-Ocampo (North Plainfield, Watchung Ave) – Presbyterian Peace Fellowship
* Sara Burke (Westfield) – volunteer with the Committee on Local Arrangements (COLA)
* Margaret Hoogsteen (Westfield) – passionate Presbyterian who has attended most General Assemblies as an observer