



# Pastor's Update

## Mike Housholder & Merv Thompson, Editors

925 Jordan Creek Pkwy ■ West Des Moines, IA ■ Jan. 23, 2009

By Pastor Merv Thompson

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"Grace and peace to you from the God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Jackie and I would like to thank all of those who have been offering prayers and love for us during this time when our daughter Deanna is struggling with breast cancer. Pastor Mike and Pastor Richard have led the concern and compassion emanating from Hope and we know this is making a huge difference in our painful and uncertain journey. As Mike would say, "this is church."

Deanna has finished 21 radiation treatments, seeking to destroy the cancer cells that damaged two vertebrae in her back. This past week, they filled one of the two vertebrae with cement, a newer procedure which gives the back stability and strength. Later in the spring, she will have to deal with the breast tumor. This is certainly a marathon, not a sprint. Thanks for being prayer partners with us, with Deanna and her husband Neal, and 12 year old Linnea and 9 year old Annika.

### Staff Leadership Development.

For much of church history, congregations were basically led by clergy. The Roman Catholic Church, with its huge network of schools, called large numbers of non-clergy to teach, but Protestant congregations down through the centuries have been primarily clergy-led. Even today in most Protestant congregations, pastors are the primary leaders.

However, when congregations grew in size and when many churches during the past generation moved well beyond the one-clergy model, the need for adding non-clergy staff became urgent. Directors of Christian education, music directors, youth directors, administrative personnel, custodial services all became commonplace. Larger congregations needed to establish a process by which non-clergy staff persons could be recruited, called and incorporated into staff leadership.

Especially large congregations, such as Lutheran Church of Hope, branched out to add even more specialized staff members, for instance, media experts, small group and Alpha leaders, chaplains and pastoral care specialists, finance and communication personnel. Compared

to many other very large congregations, Hope has kept a very lean and efficient staff structure, largely because Pastor Mike has focused so intently on the concept of team ministry.

Because there will never be enough staff members to do all of the ministry, nor should there be, it means that each staff person must multiply their own efforts. They need to develop teams, manage teams, and avoid becoming just the consummate "doers." Undergirding this ministry, the staff structure must be carefully orchestrated so that it empowers staff members, rather than putting unnecessary roadblocks in their path.

Most studies suggest that congregations will rarely, if ever, grow beyond the competencies, the vision, the commitment, the passion, the faith of the staff members. Thus at Hope, there is a strong emphasis on staff development and growth, both personal and professional. It is absolutely necessary that each staff member continues to grow, to expand horizons and to learn how to lead in the setting of a very large church.

For 2009 it was decided that we undertake a very specific staff leadership development track for all staff members. Pastor Merv is teaching these sessions. Once a month we gather together to grow in our understanding of leadership and the work to which we have been called. The following topics are a part of this learning event.

### January. Session One. A Called Leader.

The meaning of vocation. What does it mean to be called by God? How are we called? We are called by our gifts, by other leaders, by events and circumstances in our lives, by a congregation. How has God called us? How is God still calling us?

### February. Session Two. A Team Leader.

A basic textbook for our understanding of team ministry has been Doing Church As A Team by Wayne Cordeiro.

He describes what it means to be a team player on a church staff. Teams can be so much more effective than “soloed” individuals. Each staff member must be a part of several teams and should be creating new teams. What makes for an effective team?

#### March. Session Three. A Visionary Leader.

A leader is one who helps create, articulate and implement a vision. The role of a leader in a congregation is to seek to discern God’s vision and then respond to it. The Bible gives us many powerful visions. Without a vision people perish. With a vision, a congregation or ministry has enormous power.

#### April. Session Four. A Congregational Leader.

To be effective, a leader must understand the context, the local congregation, the denominational tradition, and the theological underpinnings. At Hope, a staff leader needs to know the story of the congregation, the history, the mission and vision. Are we a village church or a camp church? What is “an evangelical Lutheran church?” What is a new paradigm church? How does size influence a congregation?

#### May. Session Five. A Post-Christendom Leader.

Everything has changed in the past generation. We have moved from Christendom to Post-Christendom. “When a paradigm changes, everyone goes back to zero.” Most of us were raised in Christendom so how do we lead in Post-Christendom? Most mainline churches seem to be preparing for 1959. How do we become a 21<sup>st</sup> century church?

#### September. Session Six. A Significating Leader.

A leader continues to suggest what is important, what is relevant and what is significant. Too many churches major in the minors, focusing huge energies on that which doesn’t matter very much. Communicating effectively in this digital age becomes crucial. Communicating the significant is even more crucial.

#### October. Session Seven. A Biblical Leader.

There are three basic patterns of biblical leadership; interpretive, relational, implementive. Most staff members are especially gifted in one of these arenas but we need to know which one. In a larger staff, it is essential that we have highly talented people in each of these three patterns. An attitude of abundance rather than an attitude of scarcity.

#### November. Session Eight. A Transformational Leader

A biblical view of transformation (metamorphosis). The difference between transactional and transformational leadership. We are just one new idea away from transformation. Being transformed into a servant leader. The Hope Circle.

#### December. Session Nine. A Healthy Leader.

What is a healthy congregation? What is a healthy leader? Developing clear boundaries. Self define and stay in touch. What is a healthy place to work? The importance of self-care. Ending well.

Lutheran Church has a highly motivated, talented, dedicated staff. Please pray for them, encourage them, and respond to them. Pray also that we can grow enough to keep up with this rapidly growing, changing, and dynamic congregation.