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Articles

The World is Changing

By Kevin Van Wyk

What trends do you see in our culture that are affecting the church? Really ponder this for a moment. Our staff has had some great discussions around this question, and I've enjoyed reading some blogs on trends in the US.

The staff listed things like social media influence, busyness, apathy, minimalism, division, privatization, and many more. I am sure you could add others.

The one trend I'd like to address today is what I will call "everything on demand." We rarely watch what is on TV, we stream what we want from Netflix, Pureflix, or Amazon. We want food available always, and restaurants are accommodating. We want news on our time schedule, not just at 10pm - that's out of date. Newspapers are outdated before they print. If I have a question or something I want to learn about, going to the library later in the week will not cut it. Google will give me a plethora of articles and videos to peruse immediately. We want "everything on demand."

What does that have to do with church? Well, the Sunday morning service has for many years been our primary, if not exclusive, discipleship vehicle. And what we provide has been on our schedule. If you miss the one hour window, you can request a DVD, but that will take a while to get.

The reality we face is that more and more people are having to work on Sundays, have family events, or simply choose to be gone. We can blame

employers, sports, and affordable vacations, but that does us no good. Like it or not, people want spiritual growth tools available immediately.

This might actually be a really good thing. If the church can provide engaging, trustworthy teaching 24/7, disciples may consume biblical truth faster than ever. They may be the brightest, most informed believers ever. Now, we can make information available, but information does not make a mature disciple. That information must be processed in relationships.

So, as our Equipping Ministry Teams look at the future, we must find ways to provide answers and tools for discipleship 24/7, but also create more opportunities for that information to be processed and applied in relationships. We need new wineskins.

“And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins.” Mark 2:22

For those of you who are younger and excited about this trend, we'd love to hear more from you about what you need. What issues are most pressing for you to understand? Marriage, parenting, politics, leadership...? A second question is more difficult: What vehicle would be most helpful to process what you learn online? Small groups, mentoring, Sunday school, online chat coaching, workshops, retreats, or something else. Let us know.

For those of you who are older or dread using technology, don't give up on the next generation. They need you more than ever. They need to process and apply the information they are learning, and you have the experience and love they desperately need! This will often be informal. It may simply be asking questions at Sunday dinner or after their sporting event. Please accept this as a challenge... ask younger folks personal questions. How are you really doing? What decision are you struggling with?

What is God saying to you lately?
How can I pray for you this week?

We are in for an adventure as we sort through the best way “to develop and deploy Christ-like leaders.” I hope you will be all in and see God do an amazing work in you and in many others.

God and Man Working Together from the Beginning

By Doug Shotsky

It's interesting how during certain seasons of life the way we look at things changes based on things we are learning or focusing on. I remember when I was younger being a waiter, and if I'd go to a restaurant, I would focus a lot on the service because I spent hours and hours of my life at that time serving people. I also spent many summers doing landscaping trying to put the perfect stripes in lawns, and shaping the bushes just right. During that time, everywhere I would go I would stare at the landscaping either admiring what a great job someone had done, or critiquing what they could've done better.

Today it's no different. As we are going through the Experiencing God series, I have been really focused on the ideas that God is always at work around us, and that He invites us to become involved with Him in His work. So, this morning I began a reading plan to read through the Bible in a year, and as I began in Genesis, I see that God has been inviting us to become involved with Him in His work since the beginning. I hadn't noticed this before, but now that I'm focusing so much on this, it seemed to jump right out at me. Let's take a look.

In Genesis 2:8 the Lord planted a garden, and He places the man in the Garden:
8 Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.

Then if we go down a few verses to Genesis 2:15 we see that the Lord had placed the man in the Garden to work it and take care of it:

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

God was at work providing a way to care for His creation. He planted a garden and then he invited Adam to become involved with Him in His work. But this isn't the only time I noticed this in the beginning. Let's go down a couple of more verses to Genesis 2:19-20:

19 Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

Here God was at work naming the animals He had created. And, instead of just naming them Himself, He brings the animals to Adam, invites Him to become involved with Him in His work, and "whatever the man called each living creature, was its name."

That is so cool to see that from the beginning the Father has been working, and that He has been inviting us to become involved with Him in His work. Not because he needs our help, but because of what reality 2 from our Experiencing God series says: "God pursues a love relationship with you that is real and personal." That's not just for us today, but God has always been pursuing a love relationship with His creation that is real and personal, and He knows that an intimate bond like no other is formed when we work together with Him to accomplish His work!

The Here and Now

By Jessa Ter Beest

Celebrate with me! The kids in this church are getting into their Bibles and reading God's word! They're encouraging each other to read more of their Bibles on snow days and starting group Bible Studies on the Bible App. Every single week they come into youth group and we have a sharing time for them to tell about the Bible passage or

devotional they've been reading. What started out as (most likely) excitement to get the candy that goes with it has turned into sharing that takes more time each week with their excitement to tell details and more kids sharing each week! I can't wait for the day it takes the whole hour of teaching time with them sharing that we can't even get to the lesson I prepare. What could be better than them teaching and inspiring each other!?

So this leads me to encourage you as parents, grandparents, and church family members - the people who, at baptism vow to teach and train these kids up in God's word: If you aren't currently in the Word because you've been busy or maybe because you've been avoiding it or it feels like a chore - please, please, please take a lesson from these incredible kids. Be inspired by their passion and get back into God's word and watch it transform your life. I cannot tell you how grateful I am for the push from them to keep reading and enjoying and loving my relationship with God. These kids aren't just the future of our church - they are the Here and Now and are rooted in God's word. Let's follow suit, church!

This week we announced that as a reward at the end of the school year, kids who read and share 10 weeks (we only meet at church 11 more - so this is a big challenge!) will get a day trip to the Dells! If you would like to sponsor a trip for one of these incredible kids, you can write a check to Alto Reformed Church for \$30 with "Bible Reading" in the memo line and put it in my church mailbox or bring it to one of the fundraisers coming up. At the youth services we'll have the names of the kids who complete the challenge up on the screen. Even more than financial support I ask you for your verbal support during Bridge Dinners or by talking to them before or after church about what they're reading and sharing what you're reading!

*Parents - please check your email for details on your student participating. Attendance won't necessarily be mandatory for students to get their "check mark" that week.

Golden Lifers Update

By Julie Medema

Somehow, we missed getting a copy of the latest AMEN. Now that someone gave us their copy, I've read it through from 'cover to cover' and realized again just how much our church family has meant to us over the years. Everyone's articles were so meaningful and good! We were blessed. I'm so glad we didn't miss them!

And now I need to tell you about a group that's dear to our hearts – the Golden Lifers. You've heard it before, but I'll say it again – we meet each Wednesday morning at 9:30-11am for Bible study, doughnuts, and coffee. Some ambitious folks even home bake breads or cake – yummy! (Roxy? Mary?)

Right now, we're taking a weather break, but we'll resume in March to continue our studies with Pastor Ted. Presently, we're finishing up a study of the Psalms.

Say, wouldn't you like to join us? We'd love to see you!

Messages

Thank you for all the words of comfort, cards, prayers, meals and visits to the funeral home after the passing of our brother Byron. We are truly blessed by our church family.

Al and Cena Kamphuis

I would very much like to thank the Women's Missionary Group for the gift card. Thank you to the entire Church for your Christmas cards and letters. Most of all thanks for your continued prayers for me. It is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Aaron Zeatlow

United States Air Force

Las Vegas, NV

Thank you for the basket of fruit. I shared it with others and that made me feel good. Gloria delivered

it to me and thanks for that also. Blessings to my church.

Thanks again-

Arlene Henning

We would like to thank everyone that helped with dad's funeral including the pastors, the lunch servers, and Gloria for playing piano. Thank you for all the thoughts and prayers of everyone from the ARC over the last couple of weeks.

The Family of Merle Navis

Thank you to the church family and Kathy for the delicious fruit basket. Thanks to everyone for their prayers, love, and cards that are shown to me while I'm now at Maplecrest Manor. Much thanks also to Pastor Kevin & Pastor Doug for their visits and the many shepherds who visit weekly.

Carol DeGroot

Thank you for your generous gift to our foster agency. This donation will be used towards a variety of areas including special activities such as cooking classes for youth, one on one outings in the community, our playground accessories and supplies for our kid's craft night. We appreciate the local support from your church.

Pillar & Vine

Chandra Neumann

A big thank you to all of you for your love and thoughtfulness in the past year. The fruit basket was yummy! We so enjoyed the cards and family pictures that came this Christmas! (What a good-looking bunch you all are!)

Thank you-

Pastor Ted, Julie & Sue

Events

February 3 – Dave & Char Alexander here to share during Sunday School.

February 8 – 5:30pm Soup Supper & Bible Trivia

News

Change of Address

Christian Home
452 Fox Lake Road
Waupun, WI 53963

Joel & Pamela Ruis
N4468 Hwy 49
Brandon, WI 53919

Change of Phone

Eleanor Loomans
(920)324-7710

The RCA's Ministry Impact Report will help you see the real value of the assessments we contribute to the RCA and why being part of a denomination is a valuable partnership. Enjoy reading...

<http://images.rca.org/docs/ministry/MinistryImpactReport.pdf>