

Post-Church Workshop: Spiritual Gains & Growing Pains -- the Path to Greatness

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Notes -

General advice from Bill Breeden about this experience with a growing church:

Deep Listening.

Assume good will.

Trust in leadership to act in the best interests of the church.

Empower people to do things.

- Organizational chart - the minister needs to have authority as well as responsibility re: staff; they work with the staff more than the Board - #1 cause of burnout of ministers is supervision without full hiring/firing authority
- You may have to change your bylaws. We had to.
- How was it determined that growth would be sustained and not temporary? You don't know. As you go, the answer comes. You live. You see how it goes.
- Appreciative Inquiry process.
- When they did two services they cloned everything, but now that isn't the case (ex. Younger kids came to early service and teens came to the later time)
- [Spirit Play RE program](#) - it lessens the burden on volunteer teachers; the kids do a lot of it themselves; a story is shared and then kids wonder; there are stations around the room and kids choose and you let them do their own thing
- War, poverty, hatred, and fear → allows a UU church to grow if the church is open and accepting
- Biggest blindspot UUs have is Christians (being prejudice towards people who have Christian beliefs); let's open all the closets and really be welcoming
- He wants UUs to be Biblically literate because it's impacted our society for so long; host an intelligent Bible study
- ***Balancing the need for space with love of a historic building***
 - Coffee hour is too loud -> you can do sound treatment for the ceiling
 - You may outgrow your building, but it is a good way down the road
 - Look at options here on site before leaving the site
 - You may get to the point of trying two services again (there will be resistance and anxiety; you'll live through it and grow through it; some people say you lose

a community, but you gain a community, too AND you may end up with two communities); it does take more work, but the spiritual gain far outweighs the growing pain (check out Bloomington, IN on a Sunday)

- His guess is that we'll go to two services before we go to another building
- **How do you make governance more spiritually rewarding?**
 - Build in a fun component to every meeting you have
 - Recognize your community together before you go to work; be people with one another
 - Keep your mission a focus; Have a mission statement that is brief enough you can put it on a coffee cup
 - "We come here to be out there -- out of our love for humanity" Emphasis on Universalist - love for all (inherent worth and dignity - in a less intellectual form (KF observation)
- **How do you get people to volunteer?**
 - leadership development; invite specific people to a leadership training → gets people involved and helps with confidence; there is a Leadership School (Florence piped up and said there is money to send people to this)
 - Empower those who want to see something happen -- if come to you with a suggestion, suggest they gather a group to work on the issue and give them the freedom to go at it. Bloomington church has 25 taskforces -- the speak for themselves, not for the entire congregation. If they sponsor an event, it is by "XYZ taskforce of the UU church of Bloomington"
- **What about the challenge of UU children leaving, but only 10% come back?**
 - Children sometimes reject their parents
 - incorporate youth into the service more
- Growth through social justice work; they became known in the community as people involved in local social justice issues (T-shirts; local government officials knew about their work, etc)
- "Be an evangelical" = Breeden means it in the context of telling good news to people (not proselytizing)
- **Question: what is your relationship to the university in Bloomington?**
 - Close to campus; the university uses the space for recitals and other things
 - Congregation used to be mostly be university people, but with the growth they have become economically diverse and people work in a wide range of jobs (less racial diversity, but Bloomington is not very diverse and our church culture is very different from the African American church culture → their choir did some work with a black church choir)
- No membership fee at Bloomington church and they don't have a big endowment

- Social Justice, Good Music, Religious Education, and Good Services → Growth
- ***Question about dealing with Upstairs/Downstairs mentality with RE and the term “Religious Education”***
 - Bloomington calls it Religious Education and Lifelong Learning
 - Intergenerational services with Florence; include youth in the services beyond the youth service
- ***Question - can you talk about intentional steps to engage with the community?***
 - They became a welcoming congregation
- ***Question about age diversity in the congregation***
 - Bill said with the growth the congregation got younger
 - Find ways to include younger members in the leadership of the church (alongside the older generation)
 - He said more, but I had to step out for a few minutes
- Additional notes on mission/purpose. We need to ask “how are we going to be together?” need to be loving, spirit-led and fund and staff for growth.
- Possible AI approach - what do you love about this church? What would you be unhappy about if it were missing from this church?
- Recommended book - [Out of the Flames](#) on life of Michael Servetus