

The Church for the Next Generation

Moving the Needle on Lostness

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son
and the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;
and lo, I am with you always,
even to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:19–20 (NASB95)

Some sobering truths about churches in America

- Most churches in America are plateaued or declining.
- Every year in America somewhere between 4,000 and 7,000 churches close their doors forever.
- New churches in America are not replacing those that have been lost.
- The church is failing at its mission: America is now ranks 3rd, behind China and India, in the number of lost people in the nation.

What has happened?

- There is no single, simple answer. Our culture's changes, their impact on the church, and the church's inability to adequately respond to these changes is a factor.
- However, probably the biggest factor is that most churches are not focused on God's mission for the church. They may know it, may acknowledge it, and may be able to recite it, but they do little to fulfill it.
- The church declines because it does not win the next generation to Christ in greater numbers than it did the previous generation. That's all about mission.

Words of warning for the church

- The church that lives in the past will soon have no future
- The church that loses sight of its mission will soon lose God's blessing
- The church that turns inward will grow sick and decline
- The church that will not change will never have a chance to reach the next generation
- The church that cares more about being taught, having good fellowship, and good programs than leading others to Christ is already on its way out
- The church that does good, but doesn't lead people to Christ, is not on God's mission and should not expect God's continued blessing

Words of encouragement for the church

- The church that puts God's mission first: reaching new people for Christ, will be around generations from now
- The church that wisely, with God's leadership, responds to its changing context will be able to reach each successive generation
- The church that goes outside the walls to reach people, rather than waiting for people to come inside the walls, will always be a healthy church
- The church that isn't satisfied with what it has already done for God, and tries to do more, is a church God will bless

What about North Park Church and the next generation?

- The most important decision our church can make for the next 20 years is, “What will be our mission?”
 - What is our continuing reason to exist?
 - What is it that God has left us here to do?
 - What part of God’s work still needs to be done?
 - How has God equipped us, formed us, and led us this far that gives us clues to his future plans for us?
- The next most important decision is, “How much are willing to give to fulfill our mission?”

This morning: clarifying the mission

- Look at the most significant statistic we can consider when thinking about the mission of North Park Church for the future
 - It is a statistic intimately connected to God's mission for his church
 - It is a statistic we probably have a sense of, but may be surprised when we learn exactly what it is
 - It is a statistic that can help us grasp the size of the mission we face, and help us measure how much God wants to do through us
 - It is a statistic that should humble us and motivate us to do much more for God today than we did yesterday

The statistic:
the truth about
lostness in our
area

Only 1
out of every 25
people around
us is saved



96% of all people in our area are lost

The truth
about
lostness in
our area

Only 1
out of every 25
people around
us is saved

City	% Evangelical
Pittsfield, MA	1.5
Providence-Warwick-Pawtucket, RI	1.7
Springfield, MA	1.9
New York metro area, NY, NJ, CT	2.3
Boston-Worcester area, MA	2.5
New London-Norwich, CT	2.5
Hartford, CT	2.7
Bangor, ME	3.8
Portland, ME	3.8
Lewiston-Auburn, ME	5

The Religious Data Archives, 2000

There are
340,000+
people living
in our area

Only 13,600 are
born-again
Christians



96% of all people in our area are lost

Think of
people you
know outside
of church

How many saved
people do you
know in your
neighborhood,
school, workplace?



96% of all people in our area are lost

Lost people
are not
uniformly
distributed

Some areas, some
demographic
groups will have
more saved
people



96% of all people in our area are lost

Lost people
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Some areas, some
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96% of all people in our area are lost

What does
this say about
our mission?

Can we avoid the
conclusion that we
must push back the
needle on lostness
in our area?



96% of all people in our area are lost

Suppose we
said our
mission was to
move the
needle just 1%?

What would that
take?



Moving the needle just **1%**

To move the
needle 1%

3,400 people
would need to
be saved



Moving the needle just **1%**

To move the
needle 1%

17+ new churches
(with 200±
members each)
would be needed.



Moving the needle just **1%**

To move the
needle 1%

We'd need 17+ new
pastors, worship
leaders, worship
bands, meeting
places, etc., etc.



Moving the needle just **1%**

To move the
needle 1%

Our current
evangelism
methods would
have to change



Moving the needle just **1%**

To move the
needle 1%

Our current
thinking about
staffing, buildings,
and ministries will
probably prove
inadequate



Moving the needle just **1%**

To move the
needle 1%

...would take a
some different
approaches than
we are currently
taking.



Moving the needle just **1%**

How would
we do this?

We'd win people
one at a time.



Moving the needle just **1%**

How would
we do this?

We'd partner to
help each other.



Moving the needle just **1%**

How would
we do this?

We'd teach
those we win
how to win
others.



Moving the needle just **1%**

How would
we do this?

We'd join with
others to
multiply our
efforts.



Moving the needle just **1%**

Now,
suppose...

...suppose this is
the mission God
wants us to
undertake?



Moving the needle just **1%**

Why wouldn't
it be?

This is what Jesus
gave us orders to
do (Matthew
28:19-20), didn't
he?



Moving the needle just **1%**

Why wouldn't
it be?

This is what the
early church did
(with great
effectiveness),
shouldn't we?



Moving the needle just **1%**

Why wouldn't
it be?

God planted us
where lostness is
great, didn't he?



Moving the needle just **1%**

Why wouldn't
it be?

Lost people here
deserve the
chance to hear
the good news,
don't they?



Moving the needle just **1%**

Why wouldn't
it be?

We couldn't do
anything more
pleasing to God,
could we?



Moving the needle just **1%**

Why wouldn't
it be?

We couldn't do
anything that
would make more
of a difference,
could we?



Moving the needle just **1%**

If this *is* what
God wants...

...it is a God-sized
task and will only
be accomplished
with his leadership
and power.



Moving the needle just **1%**

If this *is* what
God wants...

...we've already
begun - laying
the groundwork
in praying.



Moving the needle just **1%**

If this *is* what
God wants...

...our training on
how share our
faith beginning
this Wednesday
will get us started.



Moving the needle just **1%**

If this *is* what
God wants...

...we have
networks of
people, experts,
and co-workers to
tap into.



Moving the needle just **1%**

If this *is* what
God wants...

...each of us will
have to take a big
part in carrying
out the mission.



Moving the needle just **1%**

If this *is* what
God wants...

...we should
make up our
mind to do it,
and get to work.



Moving the needle just **1%**

The church for the next generation begins today

“...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

Acts 1:8 (NASB95)

“...but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Bridgeport, and in all Fairfield County and Connecticut, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”