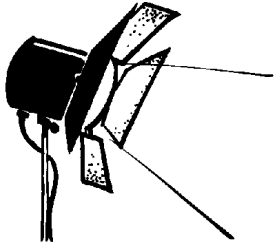


The Proactive Pulse



Are We Really Living What we Profess?

(Part II of II)



July/August
2011

Today, perhaps more than ever, people are searching for *authenticity*. When we proclaim ourselves as Christ Followers, those inside the walls and beyond the walls of the church will begin to take careful notice. Like every other human being on the planet, we are sinners, with plenty of shortcomings and issues - but to consistently seek to live what we profess, confessing when we fail and pressing on toward complete love - this is modeling following Christ.

As congregations it becomes critically important to our *collective* witness and organizational authenticity that we live what we profess. In this edition of the Proactive Pulse, we explore Part II of, "Are We Living What We Profess?"

Two major professions we often hear in nearly every church:

Widespread Profession #1: "We truly care about each other. "

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First encounters with Antioch Church

Sam and Gayle visited Antioch Church two Sundays in the same month. The first time they attended worship someone brought a mason jar of chocolate chip cookies to their door that same afternoon. They were impressed and liked the homemade cookies much better than the "reader's digest form letter not personally signed by the pastor" they received in the other church they had visited. There was a little handwritten card attached to the cookies which read, "*Thanks for worshipping with us today! Hope to see you with us again soon. We are a church that truly cares about each other.*"

The week after the cookie drop, they had to be out of town to see Gayle's mother, who had experienced a fall and spent a day in her local hospital, about two hundred miles from where Sam and Gayle lived. Her mother was fine except for much frustration and a collection of bruises. They took her back home, got her settled in and started the long drive back to their home.

On the way, Sam said, "Did we have any of those chocolate chip cookies left the folks from Antioch Church brought us?"

Gayle said, "Are you kidding me Sam? You know that a jar of homemade cookies would not last more than two days at our house!"

"I just hoped that you had put some of them aside, kind of out of my sight. Anyway, I want us to go back and visit again next Sunday. The people there seemed fairly friendly."

"A couple of them met me and asked me a little about us. That was nice. And then the one gentleman who was a greeter came and found me after the service and asked me if we would like to receive the church newsletter which tells about things going on at the church. Remember?"

"Yes, I do, Gayle. I am glad he did - because that's how they found out where to bring the cookies! Let's fill out that pad thing this next time and be sure we put our address down again, in case they lost it."

"You're such a cookie junkie! I hope that's not why you want to go back this week!"

Sunday arrived and the couple visited Antioch again. They were greeted by the greeters, and personally spoken to by two other folks in the sanctuary as well. Just like Sam suggested they filled out the attendance pad with their full address on the lines.

When they got finished eating lunch at Ted's Montana Grill, Sam said, "Wow. What a great lunch! I want to get home and take a nap with the remote control."

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First Encounters with Antioch Church (continued from page 1)

“You can certainly do that Sam, right after we pick up the papers, dust the furniture and vacuum the great room. I’m going to fix some peach tea and be ready for the next visitors who will be coming, since we will be home all afternoon.”

Sam said, “Fine. I guess that means I will have to stay dressed and awake?”

“Unless you want to be suddenly awakened and have to open the door to meet folks you don’t know. You are not very welcoming right after you are in the nap mode, Sam.”

Three o’clock came. No visitors. Four o’clock and then five o’clock passed. The living room looked great. Gayle had the tea service all ready to bring in. But no visitors ever came. Gayle asked Sam, “Wonder why they didn’t come all afternoon Sam? I mean this is the second time we have visited and registered as visitors!”

“They probably ran out of cookies Gayle. But since they came after our first visit I thought they would come back to see us again after the second. Maybe they decided we weren’t the right kind of people. After all some of them saw our house last week and we are still driving our old cars. We were also pretty casual compared to lots of the folks in service. Maybe they are formal.”

“Stop Sam. I know you have had bad church experiences in the past, but let’s not give up on this one just yet.”

Reflections to discuss:

- ⊙ Based on Sam and Gayle’s experience, what seems to be Antioch’s outreach strategy plan for worship visitors?
- ⊙ What perception of the church did Gayle and Sam begin to get after their second visit, following the cookie drop?
- ⊙ What can we, in our church, learn from Sam and Gayle’s experience? What would we do differently – if anything?

Popular Profession #2: "We really would love reach more people and grow."

Bill, the Pastor of Ebenezer UMC was having breakfast with Tom, the recently appointed Chairperson of Witness and Outreach in the church. Tom had just returned with Al, another member of that ministry area from a large training event held at one of the fastest growing churches in the nation.

Bill said, “Well Tom, I am eager to hear what you and Al learned at that powerful Grow Your Congregation Conference you guys attended last week.”

“Pastor Bill, it was incredible. The worship there was phenomenal, hundreds of people were in the place, the speakers were just spiritually dynamic and they gave us a notebook with the training in it that must weigh 10 pounds. We also have a couple of DVDs to play in the study groups we hope to form here in a few weeks.”

“Sounds like you and Al are really motivated and prepared to come back here and get this some serious outreach going here right away. What is one of the most important strategies you learned in the training?”

“We need to first have a six week study on Hospitality. It all starts with how we prepare for visitors who will be coming to our church. We want to come to see them in a whole new way. We want proper forms for them to fill out. We need to beautify the yard, the flowers, and paint the front porch of the sanctuary to make it look more appealing and attractive. We are going to study all the scriptures that relate to our being people of hospitality. They have some things on the DVD about this too. And they said if any folks from our church comes to the next conference in 12 weeks that we would get a sizeable discount.”

“That’s really neat Tom. My only concern is that for the last two years we have had so few visitors, other than relatives of some of our members. Our church is not on a main highway as you know, and there are many churches in this area.”

“I know what you mean Pastor Bill, but they assured us if we would get the whole thing ready then we will start having more visitors.”

“Did they talk about what churches, pastors and leaders are to do when they get really worn out with working hard on the inside of the walls and the visitors are just not coming in?”

“No, as a matter of fact they said if we would do these studies faithfully, using all the materials and resources, that our people would be so prepared when the visitors come that we would be amazed at how quickly they will join the church.”

“I see Tom. Are you and Al talking about a time frame to start this course that you two are going to be teaching everyone here?”

“That’s why I wanted to have breakfast with you Pastor Bill. We did discuss it and we feel that you are by far the best teacher in our entire church. We think we should give you the materials, have you go through them, and since you were unable to attend the session we went to, we want to have the church pay for you to attend the next major Conference they are having. And we want you to maybe take two or three more of our leaders with you so that when we have all completed the training, we can get this thing moving.”

Popular Profession #2:

"We really would love reach more people and grow." (continued from page 2)

Pastor Bill said, "Just a minute Tom. The Council sent you two with the idea that you would come back home, get a group together and teach the materials. What's up with that plan?"

Tom said, "Well, as I got to thinking about it Bill, I just have so little time for taking on one other thing. This is supposed to be a weekly study group. I would have to prepare to teach it, make phone calls to keep people reminded and then there are also assignments that are pretty taxing on our time. And besides that Pastor Bill, you know I am the Lay Leader, which put me on several other committees. I am starting a new Sunday School class which everyone said we needed and Angie wants me to help the youth with the Pumpkin Patch this fall also. I realized that this would just be too much to be responsible for. I'm here at the church about 3 or 4 nights most weeks."

"No problem Tom. I understand completely. There are just not very many of you in our church that have leadership gifts and I suppose we are all trying to do too much. But we really need to reach more people and grow the church. That's the main reason we sent you and Al to the Conference event. Wonder if Al would be able to lead the study?"

Reflections to discuss:

- Describe an experience you have had where you attended a large, distant training event with hundreds of people, came back home and did not find good response from fellow church members when you tried to train others in the "plan" you learned. What motivational and relational dynamics are at work here?
- Please read Matthew 28:16-20. What does this mean to you personally as a Christian disciple and leader? How would you feel about a group of you having in depth, effective training in your church on "Living Out The Great Commission Through Loving, Relating and Encouraging" ?
- Describe Tom's situation as a Leader in his church? How did his life as a Leader become SO painful and frustrating? Do you know anyone like Tom?
- There are two TOP reasons why laity don't do consistent, relational outreach are 1. Fear of Personal Rejection; and 2. Lack of training and experience in what to do. Discuss your responses to these reasons.

Our Calendar

August

7 Envisioning
Forsyth FUMC, Forsyth, GA

9-10 Staff Retreat
Beaumont FUMC, Beaumont, TX

12-14 Evangelism & Outreach (LRE)
Inman Park UMC, Atlanta, GA

19-21 Spiritual Transformation Weekend
Barnabas Ministry Group, Atlanta, GA

23 Executive Committee Meeting
Proactive Ministries, Smyrna, GA

26-28 Evangelism & Outreach (LRE)
Julia Porter UMC, Porterdale, GA

26-28 Launching Our Spiritual Vision
Barnabas Ministry Group,
Griffin District, GA

September

5 Office Closed in Observance of Labor Day

7 Envisioning
Monticello UMC, Monticello, GA

9-11 Spiritual Transformation Weekend
Beaumont FUMC, Beaumont, TX

12 Envisioning
Thomaston UMC, Thomaston, GA

16-18 Ministry Development Training
Tavares FUMC, Tavares, FL

23-24 UMM Retreat
Rock Eagle, Eatonton, GA

26-27 Worship Ministry
St. John UMC, Atlanta, GA

27 Executive Committee Meeting
Proactive Ministries, Smyrna, GA

Barnabas Ministry Groups: Taking Ministry to a New Level

Barnabas Ministry Groups are taking Proactive Ministries to a whole new level! This model is extending our ministry to several states around America! Here is a very brief description:

A Barnabas Ministry Group is a group of four to six churches, nominated by their District Superintendent, that truly want to grow spiritually and want to reach more lives for Jesus Christ. The group receives in-depth, intensive, proven training in nine major areas throughout a two year covenant. The group also gains support, encouragement and builds connective ministry relationships. Each church in the group pays a portion of the financial responsibility of the training. The group is also partially funded through donor support.

Sound interesting? Call us today at 770-803-9988 for more information on this fantastic opportunity.

Find us on the World Wide Web at:
www.proactive-ministries.org

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What is Inside?

OUR NEWS

Are We Living
What We Profess?

Do We Truly Care?

Do we want to reach
more people for
Christ?

Calendar

Dear Friends in Christ,

This edition of the Pulse is Part II of, "Are We Really Living What We Profess?" Nearly every church that we have worked with in the last 17 years boldly states when discussing their top strengths, "We truly care about each other." What is intended and how it is actually lived out is not the same. Read about Antioch Church.

Secondly, nearly every church professes, "We really would love to reach more people and grow," while sometimes we are SO busy and overloaded we cannot make this a true priority.

Our first Barnabas Ministry Group in the Griffin District of the North Georgia Conference will be launched on August 26-28, 2011. Jonesboro First UMC is the Anchor Congregation. Keep the prayers coming!!!

Blessings,

Rev. Jim Hollis



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