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The Refuge Christian

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An Engaged Congregation

by Stan Sutton

In 2005 I attended the Robert Schuller Institute in Garden Grove, Ca. One of the speakers was a man named, Michael Euliss who talked on the topic of "An Engage Congregation."

I think this topic is interesting because we are continuing to see the challenges of church ministry all across the board—we have known for some time that according to the Barna church research folks that overall church attendance decreased from the years of 1991 to 2000 in the USA. And USA Newspaper reported on September 9th (pg. 6D) that two of the largest megachurches (Joel Ossteen's Lakewood Church in Houston and Ed Young's Second Baptist Church in Houston) are having declines of 7.4% and 2.6% respectively in attendance. But "experts see more troubling concerns than slowing growth: No measurable inroads on overall church attendance and signs that many church

goes are spectators, not driving toward a deeper faith." (USA, 9/9, 6D)

So, we can measure church attendance, but that is not the whole key of what it means to be engaged as a Christian. I think Euliss has come up with an interesting list of things for us to ponder about our own relationships with Christ and the church. Let's consider part of his list.

Members Participate

Is Sunday morning the only thing you do at Refuge? What about a small group? Participation in prayer requests; Ladies group? Men's group? Sunday School? Etc. Etc.

Members feel the facility is theirs and take care of it as such.

I really think most people who come here feel that way, but I sometimes worry about the continuing need to ask for cleanup volunteers or to struggle to find people to set up for a dinner or activity. I can

remember when we came together to roof the classroom wing or do a regular spring/fall "housecleaning". We have to care about our church building!

Members Pledge/Promise their support

We'll be doing the Stewardship thing again in a couple of months and I challenge you to be one of those who makes a commitment. There are always issues that can come up that prevents us from completing our commitment and God understands those issues. But there is real benefit in our carefully considering what we want to give to God's work financially and then sacrificing to make that commitment a reality.

The church can't really thrive without engaged members. I'll talk more next month about some of the other characteristics Euliss suggests of an "Engaged Church."

- Stan

Church Finances and Other Data...

"A Broken Record..."

Worship Attendance:

August 3	135
August 10	142
August 17	160
August 24	151
August 31	136

Weekly Giving:

August 3	\$7239.50
August 10	\$4078.75
August 17	\$3650.45
August 24	\$3552.76
August 31	\$4987.02

(compiled from records provided by Barbie
Vaught, financial secretary)



REMEMBER...

Pig Roast Sept. 13th 5-7
pm in Fellowship Hall
(freewill offering)

CWC Meeting
(September 16th in the
home of Jean Lawless,
10111 E. 166th St., No-
blesville, 7 pm)

See Children's Newslet-
ter for Christmas Musi-
cal and Youth & Chil-
dren's Ministry Survey.

I can remember when I was a child that I would complain about the same thing over and over again and my mother would say, "you sound like a broken record." (for some of my younger readers a "record" was a larger and poorer quality version of today's CD's). So, having been criticized by my mother, I hate to have to talk about the same thing again this month, but the cold hard facts necessitate it.

Our weekly budget to meet all of our expenses in 2008 has been projected and approved by the church board to be \$5548.00 per week. In August we took in from all sources a total of \$23,508.48. And a little over a \$1000.00 of that was designated to go directly to our mortgage principle and so can't really be counted in income we received for regular ex-
penses. So, we had a shortfall of roughly \$1000 per week. Ouch.

It is no surprise then that Mark Coverdale, our church treasurer, had to transfer money for the second month in a row from our savings account in order to meet payroll. There are sufficient funds in our savings (roughly \$33,000 at the end of July and so less than that as of this writing), but you can see that the trend can't continue for very long at today's pace.

We do not have a long list of choices—reduce staff salaries, reduce paid staff positions, or reduce missionary contributions. Those are quite frankly the only "flexible" spending accounts we have. The utilities will remain the same and the mortgage will still have to be paid—those things we can't control (we have already been trying to manage lights, A/C, and heat to the best of our ability).

So, I ask you to pray about what your response to this problem will be (if you have been waiting to give a large gift to the church, now is the time to give it!). And, I ask you to pray for the church board as they will have to monitor this matter in the coming weeks.

Thanks for caring about and giving to Refuge,
Pastor Stan

Youth Sunday:

It's coming up on October 5th. We're doing planning during the Sunday School time on Sundays so please be sure your students can participate and stick around for Sunday School.

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