



From the Pastor

Musing Over the Last Two Years

It's been two years since I started my ministry here at the Evangelical Free Church of Vestal. What I thought I'd do this month is to give you my perspective of where we have been and where I think we are going.

My first goal in meeting you all was to get to know you. If you remember, I tried to set up appointments with all the church families to stop by and meet with you. This gave me a good start in learning about you. As I began in our church I shifted from preaching from a pulpit with my notes in front of me to preaching without a pulpit and without notes. This was a scary transition, but I am so glad that I made that move because I am able to connect with you so much better.

It didn't take long for the elders and me to start looking to the future of our church now that we had a senior pastor. At my first elder retreat we started with discussions of developing a new vision and mission statement. Within the first year of me being here we had developed it. During that first year we also talked about how we could grow spiritually as a church. We talked about going back to Haiti and investing time and energy into Vision of Hope. It had been over ten years since our first visit and so we talked about going back; this time to create a long term relationship with the ministry.

Near the end of my first year we had a brain storming session (Can you believe that was only a year ago?). From that session we found a desire to reach out to the community. I sensed that our church was moving from what I perceived as an over emphasis on discipleship to a balance of discipleship and evangelism. In other words we started to get a renewed burden for the lost. From that session came discussions on what we need to do as a church to reach the lost.

During this time Haiti has also become more of a reality. A Haiti task force had been developed. And now we plan on going with a group of eight to ten people in February of 2009.

At the beginning of 2008 the elders started reading a book called, "High Impact Church Boards" by Tim Addington. This book showed what we as elders need to be about. The book confirmed that we going in the right direction with what we were doing. Now what were we doing? We were looking outward to see how we can grow as a church.

We started the Full House Committee to see how we can reach out to the community. Through this committee we came up with ideas to reach out. Some of the things on that list were: a new sign, a name change and cooling of the church. All of these are still under consideration.

We also had Steve Musser here to talk about Church Without Walls. He challenged us to consider how we can get out into the world. Some of this is being tried out. I have tried to spend time out in the community by working on my sermons at places like Starbucks and Panera Bread. This hasn't been very productive yet, but I am still trying to get out of the office more.

One of my strategies to reach the lost is to do a needs assessment of the community. I was excited this spring when I was approved for a doctoral thesis that would involve such a needs assessment. I am currently writing the thesis and it is my hope to start running the needs assessment in February. After the assessment is done I plan on doing a sermon series on the needs and advertize this series in the community.

A lot has happened in my first two years here and I thank God for all of it. I sense His hand in all that we are doing and your prayers and hard work have been a big part of it. Who knows what will happen in the next two years.

In Him and for His glory,

Pastor Art

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