



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“LEVERAGING YOUR CHURCH’S UNIQUE INFLUENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY” WITH KARL VATERS

On January 19, 2021, Karl Vaters joined us via Zoom to share some thoughts about leveraging our church’s unique influence to impact our community. Below are some notes from the call. Find more from Karl at karlvaters.com. Find all things Noonday at noondaynet.org.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

- In recent years, people have spent time:
 1. isolated and alone, and
 2. engaged in mass and social media (nameless, faceless, and in an echo chamber).
- Both options are isolating and unhealthy. The pandemic has exaggerated these two extremes.
- The healthy place is in the middle ground of community, face to face.
- There you will find the tone in the room is much different than the tone online. People will say, copy, and share things online that they would never address one-on-one with another person.
- The primary way to leverage influence is in this middle ground—being united and having community together. This can be done by increasing the value of the in-person experience. We simply cannot get the full experience through the screen.

WE ARE ALL STRESSED

- We are all dealing with various levels of trauma right now between pandemic, deaths, political unrest, racial unrest. Neurobiologically and spiritually, each one of us is under a certain amount of trauma right now.
- When people are under trauma, they cannot hear explanations. Action & emotion parts of brain light up and logic goes dark during times of trauma.
- Our military trains soldiers to react on muscle memory, action, and emotion when under stress and under fire, not on logic. This is why it seems many are not logical in their thinking, including politics on both sides.

HOW WE CAN HELP OUR STRESSED CONGREGATION

- When we get together physically, make sermons a little shorter and lengthen times of action, emotion, and worship.
- Sing songs that are familiar to everyone, allow times of connection with others, provide times of testimony, and have plenty of time for congregational singing.
- Times of ritual bring back memories of familiarity. The small church (or small group) can shine and have influence in providing this. It helps people come out of isolation and out of mass and social media. They provide a place of familiarity and comfort.
- The place for people to find answers and hope for today’s world is in the small church.
- Churches who are healthy and provide hope and healing will be vital instruments in redeeming people and communities for Christ.

IS COVID SEASON A GOOD TIME FOR CHANGE?

- COVID has provided an opportunity for *some* changes.

- It is a great place for stopping things (and not starting back).
- Some are changes you had to do because of the pandemic.
- But otherwise don't start change because it will bring further disruption.

WHAT IF WE DON'T HAVE A LOT OF RESOURCES?

- What can churches, especially small ones, do if they don't have a lot of resources during this time?
- Ask yourself: If this pandemic happened even 10 years ago, how would you connect with others? We wouldn't have had zoom, so what would we have done?
- Whatever that answer is, is the answer to our question.
- Answer: We need to go old school. Learn how to comfort people now when we are not meeting. Give people a sense of community, real connection, and integrity that matches what we say and what we do.
- Phone people. Cook meals and drop off at their doorstep. Visit people (socially distanced). We can tell from tone and nonverbal cues how people are really doing.

TRUST AND THE SMALL CHURCH

- Amazon and Youtube have figured out that a lot of small is as valuable as a little of big. This is the concept of "the long tail."
- Small churches comprise half the body of Christ.
- The spotlight in culture is on the big churches, for good and for bad. The perception is that people don't want to come to a small church.
- However, the desire for small churches is increasing. Why? There is a distrust of big institutions.
- Trust is regained on a smaller scale.
- They want to make a connection with people they trust, and through that to put their trust in Jesus.
- If trust has been lost, the only way to regain it is to do the right thing every time for a long time.

DOING THINGS WITH EXCELLENCE AS A SMALL CHURCH

- Kurt's only prime directive for pastors: Equip God's people for the work of ministry. This happens through mentoring and personal relationships. Making disciples.
- The stylistic changes fade. The changes that stick involve growing people.
- There is no logical reason for territorialism. There are always many more unchurched to reach.
- Ministry needs to be about reaching the lost, not satisfying the saved.
- We need to be less concerned about putting on polished services and more concerned about reaching the lost.
- When people are scrolling thru Facebook they are not looking for preachers.
- Shoot 3-5 min videos in your town using pieces of sermons you already have. Do 3 or 4 of these in one sitting and post one a month on Facebook. People will be drawn to what you are saying, vs. a political post or rant which will push them away.

PASTORAL TRANSITIONS

- The most common crisis that hurts churches is pastor transition that is not done well.
- In general, the churches making healthy transitions involve the former pastor.
- Involve the potential new pastor under the radar before letting the congregation in on it.
- In the past, we shared information on a need-to-know basis. Not everyone wants to know everything. But share as much as you can unless it would be harmful.



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