


Lake Cities Community Church
Pastor Craig Schill
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Identity Theft (State of the Church Message)

When we were in Disneyland many years ago we stopped into a store on Main Street that did silhouettes. The woman there had the ability to look briefly at a person's face and to cut with amazing speed an exact silhouette out of a black piece of paper. This is a picture of Trevor age 6, Hayden 5 and Taylor 5 months. Even though it does not have any facial features, color, texture or depth, Tammy and I can look at these silhouettes and remember what our kids used to look like.

Here, let's see if you can recognize some famous silhouettes from history: (Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Barak Obama, Elvis, Alfred Hitchcock, Sherlock Holmes, The Thinker, Mary Poppins). Now the reason you could identify these silhouettes is because (like the silhouettes of our children) you have a familiarity with each one's characteristics: Holmes pipe, Churchill's cigar. Poppin's umbrella. Elvis' guitar. Ok let's try one more silhouette – What is this?  Lake Cities Community Church!

And as we consider the state of our church, I want you to consider – what are the unique characteristics of our church? If you looked, even only briefly, at our church – what defines us? Or think about it this way – if it were possible to steal the identity of a church – what would they steal from us? If we were victims of identity theft – what would we lose?

Let's begin with our four purposes, which we have had since the beginning. First is: **Worshipping**. The “ing” is a gerund – continuing activity. The Hebrew work for worshipping means literally to bow down – to submit before God? We do that corporately on Sunday morning - and individually during the week. Second? **Growing** spiritually from point A to

point B – becoming Christlike. The Bible is never satisfied with the status quo, and so we teach the Word of God. Third? **Loving** - Jesus said that the world will know you are Christians (not by advertising or building) if you love one another. The church is not like the Kiwanis club or Chamber of Commerce. There is no expectation to love the other members there. But in the church – we are brothers and sisters in the family of God. Fourth? **Sharing**. To be witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth! Light in the darkness. Worshiping, Growing, Loving Sharing. Those are certainly a big part of what defines us as a church. They are important characteristics. But if you drill down deeper, and ask, “Well, how do we do these things?” There we have grown and evolved over the past two years. Let’s work through each purpose together.

Worshiping

Our corporate worship together continues to have a historic focus – with the weekly celebration of the Lord’s Table, recognition of parts of the church calendar and occasional use of creeds and confession. This continues to be a distinctive value for LCCC. One part of corporate worship that has changed is that over the past year we have taken a step more contemporary in our music style – and I so much appreciate the contribution Tyler and the other musicians, singers and worship planners have made to our church. However, even while changing style, we have kept a commitment to a blended philosophy and I would argue we are more blended than ever. And this has grown as an important characteristic of our church. Consider this in a little more detail with me.

For those who were here – think back to our Easter service about one month ago.

During that time we sang the old hymn: “Up from the Grave He Arose” and we sang the new

worship chorus “Happy Day”. We had special music from Jim and Laurel, Trevor played some beautiful harp music during communion and we ended with Ross and Chris’ Christian resurrection rap song, “He’s Alive”. Several people came up to me after the service and commented on the diverse elements in that service, yet how they worked together: Hymns, praise songs, beautiful harmony and powerful rapping. If you have the gift of yodeling – we will find a place for you here at LCCC! But let me point out for you that this is a unique characteristic.

I visited a few weeks ago with a member from **church “A”** where they only sing contemporary songs. The hymns of the faith are not in the portfolio. A member said to me, “We are trying to lobby the pastor to sing more hymns.” But that is the vision for that church. A few years ago I met the pastor of **church “B”** which sings only hymns. They only use a hymnbook, piano and organ. When the idea to put in a screen and use power-point it was quickly shot down. That is not their identity. A friend of mine goes to **church “C”** which has one service for traditional music and a second service for contemporary music. They split up their members, which is as you know very common. I have attended **church “D”** a few times – a large church outside of San Diego. They have opted for a common sermon, but then send the people into different rooms for custom worship. One room is contemporary music, another is hymns, a third is country / blue grass worship and a fourth is big band. There are 12 different worship venues.

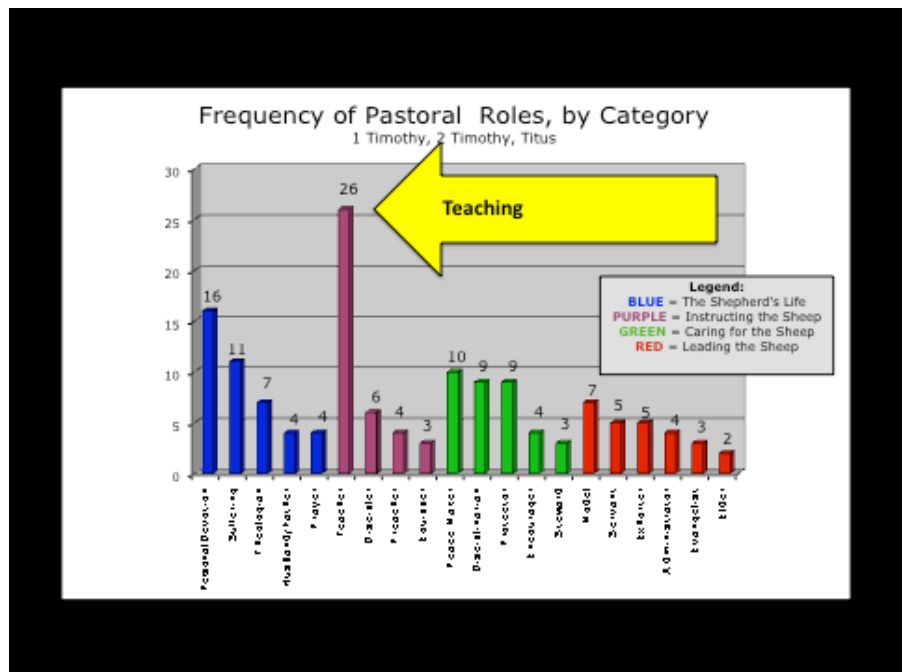
My point here is not to criticize any of these four churches – they each have made decisions to embrace a certain approach. I bring them up to try to highlight (by contrast) our identity here. At LCCC we desire to embrace people with very different preferences and put them in the same room. The result of that is often an eclectic style. I believe in the

beauty of the mosaic that is the church. Young and old, rich and poor. Rappers and harpists – all together in unity worshiping God. It seems to me that is ultimately where we are going: **Rev. 7:9** After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

Growing

Let's talk now about our purpose of growing. I will begin by stating the obvious. Prior to the worship service we have a Sunday School program that begins in the nursery, continues in the 1-3rd grade class, 4-6th grade, a youth class and adults. The reason why we run these programs is because the church has a responsibility to teach sound doctrine to its members. Now teaching

is not all there is to growing in Christ. We grow through prayer, suffering and in many other ways. However, teaching the Word is one of the most important jobs of the church. I did a study in seminary of the



pastoral letters in the New Testament and charted the different roles of the pastor / shepherd:

I only want you to look at one thing on this chart – the job of teaching is stated twice as often as any other pastoral duty – and thus it is an important responsibility of the church.

I am personally deeply indebted to church teaching programs in my own spiritual journey. My father was saved in a Sunday School class. His parents never attended church regularly. Those teachers at that corner congregational church stood in the gap. Their teaching ministry to children is now reaching to the third generation. And in my own spiritual formation, I have many positive memories of growing through Sunday School. I remember when I was probably about 9 or 10, hearing one teacher going over the story of David and Bathsheba. And in the explanation of that story, right then, something clicked for me and for the first time I really began to grasp that sin is destructive and obedience is a source of joy. That teaching complemented what I was learning at home. The teaching of God's Word is an important characteristic of LCCC: [Col. 1:28](#) We proclaim Him, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present every person complete in Christ. [Col. 1:29](#) For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

Loving

A few words now about loving. This is probably my favorite purpose - my heart years for us to love one another; and not just those like you, *but those different from you.*

Never forget that the radical revolution of the gospel was to bring Jews and Gentiles together.

The miracle of the gospel was not that a Jew could love a Jew; but that she would love a Gentile. Love in spite of differences is a powerful type of love that has been captured even by Hollywood.

The movie *Finding Forrester* is powerful because of the love between two very different people – a young African-American boy and an old poet. It is their differences that make their relationship special. The new Star Trek movie reminds us that enduring affinity between Mr. Spock and Captain Kirk is not based on their similarities, but their differences and how they complement one another. In Jane Austin's novel *Pride and Prejudice* Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennett are polar opposites – which makes their love in the end so special and unexpected.

And in the church it is the same way. Paul said – those of you who eat meat – love those who do not. Those of you who celebrate certain days – love those who do not. He would say to our church. Those of you who are older – love those who are younger. Those of you with kids – love those in our church without any children. Don't let them feel like second-class members. Those of you who home school your children – love those who public school their children. Those of you who prefer *this way* love those who go *that way*. And vice versa – vice versa – vice versa. And this is possible because what we hold in common – the gospel – Christ's life, death and resurrection supersedes all secondary issue.

Eph. 2:14 For Christ himself has made peace between us Jews and you Gentiles by making us all one people. He has broken down the wall of hostility that used to separate us.

Sharing

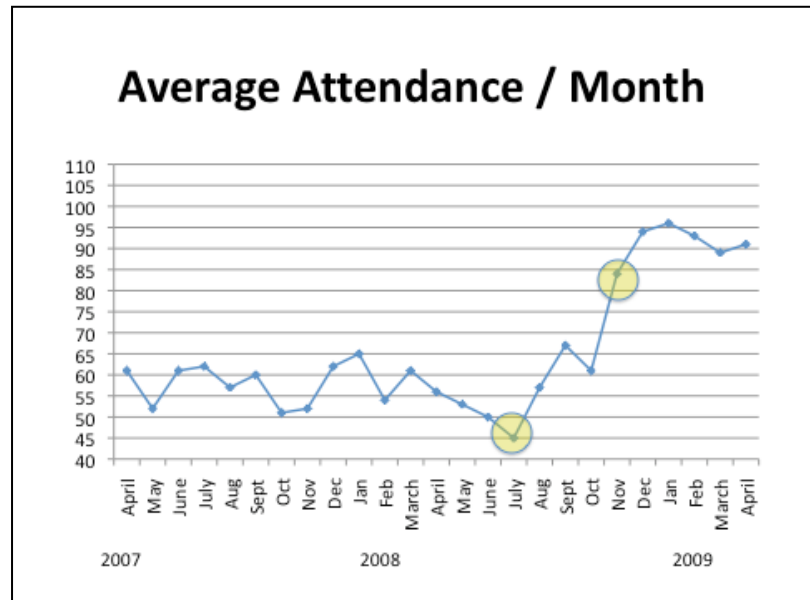
Finally, we come to our purpose of sharing the good news. This purpose gives me great joy. At the end of our kid's soccer games each player receives an award – including the “most improved” recognition. This identifying characteristic clearly must receive the “most improved” award over the past two years. Nothing excites me more than what God is doing in opening doors for us to impact this community for Christ.

A big buzzword going around these days is **missional**. I am not big on buzzwords, but the concept behind it is great – having a missionary mindset right where you live. Our work with the Rowlett Health and Rehab nursing home has been missional, and is a true ministry. We are growing in our relationship with the Rowlett Needy Children's Fund. We will continue to work with the Rowlett Police and Fire Departments and have the Bike Rodeo (This Saturday) and Softball Game coming up. We are improving our witness at the school here – to the faculty and staff. And the Lord has continued to open doors for me to minister through the Chamber of Commerce. The Lord has given us favor here in this City. And from that platform, we can then minister more broadly – in Colorado, New Orleans, Liberia, Japan, Germany and other places: **Acts 1:8 But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

Changes

If someone was going to cut a silhouette of our church, I hope that these are some of the characteristics they would notice I want us to now add another layer onto the discussion. Please take a look at this graph which presents average attendance by month since we began in 2007.

Note first this point. July of 2008 was our lowest month of attendance – during the middle of the summer 2008. It was also our last month at the child-care center. And at that time God began to grow us. This second point is the month that we merged with Grace Fellowship



Church. With the joining of our congregations and with the other new families, over the past six months our church has doubled. And we give God great glory for this.

Anytime you grow, changes are needed. When children grow, they need new pants and shoes. When a family grows, they may need a larger car. When a church grows changes are also inevitable. In fact, if we do not change to support the larger growth, we will likely over a period of time see the growth erode. Our elder board has been meeting weekly ever since the transitional elders stepped back, and we have been asking the Lord to help us see what our congregation needs, what changes we need to make. I would like to share three changes with you:

- 1) **We are adding an option of a new 1-3rd grade children's class during the worship service.** beginning the first week in June. I am stressing that this is an option, because I know that some families prefer to keep their children with them during the worship service, and that is great. My support of this option has not changed. However, as mentioned before, we

are a growing and diverse congregation and other families will value this class for their children's spiritual education and their own ability to worship the Lord. The plan is to dismiss the children to their class after our main time of singing. But let me stress again, this is 1-3rd grade only; and if you chooses to send your children to this class we pray it will be a great blessing to you and them. Or if you choose to keep your children with you in the service – they are most welcome. Just as when the cup for communion is passed, no one is watching to see if you take the grape juice or the wine! Both are valid options. In fact, this is a great opportunity to love and support those who hold different convictions than you.

- 2) **Second, we are going to begin to process to add a Deacon Board to the church governance.** With our growth we need more formal structures and people vested with appropriate responsibility. The Deacon board will consist of both men and women; charged with serving the church in such areas as facility related issues, hospitality and benevolence. Some of you will be asked to consider becoming a deacons or deaconess. So please give this as a matter of prayer to the Lord.
- 3) **The elders have directed me to set up a site team** to evaluate our mid and long-term facility issues. While we enjoy meeting here, and may indeed be here a good while longer – our future is not here. It is a clear goal for us to pray diligently and to move intentionally toward acquiring a more permanent building in which to minister and grow.

Please commit these matters to the Lord. As we close, let me encourage you that you are making a difference. Look at these silhouettes:



Because our church exists there are elderly people at the nursing home around the corner who are encouraged each month. There are firefighters and police officers who have a slightly higher regard for the reputation of Christ because LCCC has

stepped out to minister to them and their children. And because of this church, grass is being mowed. Last week someone stole the lawn mower at the Rowlett Needy Children's Fund and the need came through our Sharing team – and a LCCC family has committed to mowing and landscaping their yards. Worshiping, growing, loving and sharing together to God's glory.