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The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection
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Worship Roundtable with Sally Morgenthaler

These are my notes from the roundtable conversation and include some direct information from the presenter. This is not my original work.

Notes

- What is missional?
- What is relevant?
- Change from the premise that people will come to the building.
- “If we build it, they will come” era has come or is coming to an end.
- The thinking that has brought us to this point will not take us into the next era.
- Deeply missional
- The United Methodist Church is the biggest mainline denomination and perhaps the most missional
 - Particularly from the heritage of the denomination
 - DNA as a denomination is excellent
 - What does that mean for us?
- How do we move forward?
- Who might we be?
- If identity is strong, it is easier to change.
- When we get to partner with other people, it makes sense.
- Reputation of being intense at Resurrection
- No pet projects - if something that I do needs to be stopped or changed, that is okay.
- People and organizations will self organize if they know what they are and who they are
- How can we do this better in the future than we did in the past.
- Change, innovate, improve or die
- Began with thinking about who we are and examples / stories
- What you do outside of your job description is passion
 - Perhaps 60% of what we do is outside our job description.
- The next big idea that has been there all along - UMC
- Our DNA is to change other people’s DNA
- Staff at Resurrection - Some here have been here since the beginning and some have just arrived, yet there is a sense that we are just beginning.
- In some ways the leadership structure is valued and in some ways it is not important at all.
 - Biological systems create order out of chaos.
 - If we are not messy, we cannot do God’s work.
- Need to be engaged outside of the structural hierarchy.

Change in culture

- Digital culture has changed the way that church exists.

- There is an expectation to have a voice, connect and have meaning.
 - This may happen easily on the internet, but may be different in a worship setting.
- People expect, not only to interact, but to bring themselves to it.
 - Levels of engagement
- People are looking for personal and social interactions, and not intimate.
- Spiritual vs. religious
- anti-institutional stigma
- It may not be in the creative message, but when one comes off the stage and respond to questions.
 - Desire for authenticity.
 - Worship can be a catalyst for conversation.
 - Conversation can also be a catalyst for getting involved in worship.
- People want to be known.
- Backlash from a right wing agenda.
- There is sometimes a Christian memory
- Sometimes people are pre-Christian - with no knowledge of Jesus Christ.

How has changes in the culture affected worship at Resurrection?

- How do we be more of who we are.
- Worship attendance decreasing for the first time in a long time.
- Growing adverse reaction to a “seeker sensitive” service.
- Direct and interactive - people need to know that they have a voice.
- Suspicion of something that tends to be carefully shaped and worded - a suspicion that I am being manipulated.
- If we believe that culture is moving all of us - how is it making an impact in all age groups - not just in a particular age group.

Afternoon Session

- Hyper connected environment
- Strong identity is attractive
- Identity as fusion
 - There is difficulty in standing in the center as it is not easy to communicate that position clearly outside of the community.
- There may be two different types of standing in the center
 - Fusion - combining a message from both sides
 - Tension - bringing the good things from one side and good things from the other side and holding them together
- It may be difficult to get people commit to the radical center.
- Challenge people to exercise:
 - Humility when it comes to truth
 - Engage your mind
 - Love
 - Seeking the scriptures

- Received vs reflexive spirituality
 - The process of exercise is pushing against and also developing muscular strength.
 - Instead of a received position, there is engagement.
 - The activity of engaging with each other and with God.
 - Received - one way communication

What does it mean to be a reflexive culture within the narrative of the triune God?

- Sometimes when people want to get the message from the pastor, they are thinking that there is a clear answer in scripture and that the pastor may be able to interpret that for them.
- Culture of dialogue and conversation
 - This does not mean that you come without a position.
 - It includes an acknowledgment of limitation
- Increasing the level of engagement will help people to find their way.
- A worship service can be a way to communicate information or it can also be a way for people to experience God.

Response to a video about many different types of responses in the service

- There is a great deal of interaction
- The recognition that people are in many different places.
- There has often been a desire to try to incorporate younger generations into the worship services that are already happening.
- Boredom is not a function of time, it is a function of engagement and experience.

Challenges

- What is a tangible way that we can respond to God's word?
 - How can we increase the response quotient?
- Brainstorm collaboration
 - There needs to be a diverse enough group to produce a lot of different ideas
 - Perhaps 25% of non-staff being a part of the worship planning team.
- Are we inviting people into a product or are we inviting people into a process?
 - People want to be a part of forming their experience.
- Is there a place in the community where I am having a regular experience with people outside of the congregation?
 - The artistic collaboration from the community is going to be key when being a part of brainstorming.
 - What if people that were not a part of the congregation were a part of worship planning?
 - What is your presence in the community?
- Are there third places on the campus where conversations could begin to take place?
 - There will be a blur between where worship stops and the conversation continues.
 - Create a culture of conversation through building anterooms to worship where conversations can take place

What from our Methodist heritage may make a difference in our worship today?

- Involvement of the laity
- Whole person encounter in worship
- Experience is important

- God narrative in an appropriate vehicle
 - How can the whole service tell the God narrative?
- Expressing our heart

Looking Forward

- The church needs to be embedded in the community.