

Hopeful Imagination: Traditional Churches Finding God's Way in a Rapidly Changing World

A Travel Free Learning Article

By

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Do traditional churches have a future? Where are the traditional churches that are strong and have influence and make an impact on their communities and world? Who are the leaders of these traditional churches? What makes these traditional churches and leaders effective?

These are some of the foundational questions the leadership team for Hopeful Imagination Conference have been exploring that will be the focus of the October 22-23, 2010 Conference. First Baptist Church, Wilmington, NC at www.FBCWilmington.org, is one of those strong, influential churches – 200 years old, inner city congregation that meets in a 140 year old facility. Over the last fifteen years they have:

- moved from being plateaued to growing
- moved from being focused on maintenance issues to being missional
- moved from being inward focused to serving in their community and across the world
- moved from clergy dominated ministry to lay dominated ministries
- moved from being ignored by the city to invited and impacting their city
- reached people under 40 while keeping people over 60
- moved from having a building for them to having a facility that serves the city
- moved from traditional worship and choir to multiple worship and music opportunities which serve a broad range of persons
- and more . . .

What are the lessons in leadership that I've learned listening to effective leaders of traditional churches? What helped the leaders make the shifts mentioned above? What are the essential leadership skills? How does organizational structure facilitate these shifts? What creates momentum for laypersons to get on board for such shifts?

Lessons in Leadership

- Focus on "how we can" not "why we can't"
- Discover and communicate a clear vision
- Utilize resources effectively
- Build ownership of new dreams
- Be patient, persevering and prayerful
- Be willing to stretch your vision, skills, practice and approaches to ministry
- Learn to build effective partnerships
- Call forth the best in people—staff and lay leadership
- Learn to celebrate authentically and frequently
- Lead from dreams not despair
- Understand transition + change = transformation

Organizational Lessons

- Create parallel structures when needed
- Maximize current organization
- Create entry points for those you desire to reach

- Enlist leaders gifted to work with those you desire to reach
- Maintain focus and accountability for results
- Evaluate effectiveness regularly and be willing to make needed adjustments
- Organize around needs, callings, gifting for impact and influence
- Work through issues, rather than ignoring or avoiding them. If all else fails work around barriers
- Work with and through the remnant that creates legitimizers, momentum and leadership for new dreams

Lessons in Partnership – Learn to Ask,

- “What are the partnerships needed now?”
- “Who are those willing to partner and share our vision?”
- “What will it take to partner?”
- “What are the mutual benefits of this partnership now?”
- “What will be the long term benefits and challenges of this partnership?”
- “What partnerships are possible pathways for growth, impact, influence and opportunity?”
- “What partnerships will facilitate forward movement in accomplishing God’s vision for us now?”

Lessons About the Future

- Focus on the future; not the past
- “What leadership capacities do we need to build to move us forward?”
- “What is the ‘pull’ of your vision—rather than what is the ‘push’ of your vision for the next five years?”
- “How does our future connect with our past and present?”
- “How does our past and present serve as a springboard for our future?”

Obviously these are only summary statements reflecting powerful learnings from traditional churches that have bright and strong futures of ministering to persons of all ages, worship preferences, social and spiritual needs. First Baptist Wilmington staff and lay leadership will be sharing the details on how, and many other lessons, are being lived out in their lives and ministries now. You will also hear stories from other churches, leaders, pastors, and persons from various denominational backgrounds address these and other issues. Join us. To register or for more information about over 20 workshops, plenary sessions, concert, etc. go to www.HopefullImagination.info.

Special Bonus: Travel Free Learning Dialogue on Tuesday, April 20th at 2pm EDT. Join Eddie Hammett and Mike Queen, pastor of FBC Wilmington, for dialogue about lessons in leadership. Connect by calling 605.715.4900 and then access code 954492#.

Important Things to Know

Eddie Hammett is a Ministry Partner with The Columbia Partnership. He is a certified coach with the International Coach Federation. Recent books of which he is the author or co-author are *Reaching People Under 40 While Keeping People Over 60*, *Spiritual Leadership in a Secular Age*, and *Making Shifts Without Making Waves*. He is available for speaking and coaching with leaders, congregations, denominations, and parachurch organizations. His personal web site is www.TransformingSolutions.org. His work is also highlighted at www.cbfnc.org.

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