



Vision In Action
improving St. Therese Parish
via

- Hands-on involvement
 - Stewardship of time, talent & treasure
 - Listening and doing

**Next meeting:
April 25 - 9:00 a.m.
in Conference Room**

Vision In Action - VIA

Special Meeting held March 28, 2009

Special Guest: Terry Thorne

Attending: Fr. Bill Hoffman, Andy Somers, Bert & Mary Wiegand, Bill Kime, Doug Maki, Ellen Vissers, Ernesto Gonzalez, Greg & Jean Pethan, James Zimmer, Nancy Bourassa, Sara Buscher.

1. Opening prayer was said by Fr. Bill.

2. Introductions: Terry was introduced to the Vision In Action committee. He has been with Appleton Alliance Church since 1990.

Terry was introduced to the VIA committee members.

A new projector was noticed, Bill Kime has donated this to the parish. Thanks Bill!!

3. Power Point by Terry Thorne: Connecting One To Another -

Statistics:

3500 people call Appleton Alliance “home”, 2800 attend services each week.

60% are involved in a Home Group – about 20 people to a group. “Mini church”. They care for one another, help with meals if needed, sometimes help each other financially.

2900 name tags are printed out each week and hung near the entrance. All are asked to pick up and wear their name tag. If it is noticed that you haven’t picked yours up for several weeks, you get a phone call: what’s happening, is there anything can do to help?

History of change:

In 1996 the pastor of Appleton Christian and Missionary Alliance left the community; they were at a crossroads. They asked “where do we want to go from here?”

After surveying their membership of 550 people, certain common threads came up. They wanted their church be different from what it currently was. Their goal was to have people walk in the door and feel love. To do this they would have to change from “church as normal” – attend service and then leave – to that of a loving, caring fellowship of believers whose sole purpose was to show those attending, and those coming in for the first time, the love of Jesus Christ. They would also strive to build community by doing the “One Another’s” found in the Bible:

- Encourage one another
- Love one another
- Exhort one another
- Minister to one another
- Show hospitality to one another, etc.

On that basis they chose their next pastor, and created “First Touch Ministries”. (Also simplified their name to Appleton Alliance Church.)

They realized they were asking for a great change, and people HATE to change, so they did things very gradually, and talked and talked people through them. So the changes happened in a very planned and orchestrated manner.

They realized that one bad experience can turn people off so they never come back - or don’t make it into church from the parking lot!

They talk for weeks in advance of a change, and when the time comes people are OK with it.

Asking the questions:

Why are we doing this? Why are we here, why are we church?

We want to show people there is a better life. My experience in walking with the Lord has been fantastic, I want to share that with others.

What does the finished objective look like? "Begin with the end in mind".

People will come to feel loved and cared for.

Build a community – the Home Churches do this.

It's lonely if you don't know people when you go to church.

What type of church are we trying to grow?

Show people the Love - this is what Jesus commanded.

What sets us apart from other churches?

Didn't want to be a rubber stamp of others. Sent people out to survey "the competition" and report back.

Christ the Rock was casual

Calvary Bible was very traditional

Assembly of God was very energetic

Decided to be one in the middle. Previously were known as a "yuppie church" - uptight & formal. Transformed to be warm and casual; people dress comfortably. A tie is OK, but jeans & sandals are OK too.

Ministry Team wears "business casual"; they also wear lanyards with name tags. Different colors represent different ministries: Greeters, Connectors, Team Leaders for the day.

Terry asks VIA / St. Therese this question:

What if you want to be known as the most progressive Catholic church in NE Wisconsin?

Different, outgoing, vibrant!

Go against the "same old" and change.

What sets you apart from others?

What can you do to make things better to make people WANT to come????

How will what we do impact people's lives for the better?

Make them feel loved!

How will our ministry impact our parish/church/community?

Make people feel welcome. People now say Appleton Alliance is the friendliest church they've ever seen. Shake hands with people - more than just at the sign of peace. Hug if appropriate - it may be the only hug they get all week. Don't just hand out bulletins - GREET! Touch! Planned acts of kindness - umbrellas to hand out on rainy days, coffee.

How do we want our parish to be perceived by an unchurched person?

More and more people are being raised without church, think they don't need one; but when they become parents they think their KIDS need church!

Think about how people who have never been to church will see you.

Time for a change / implementing the plan

The selection of Ministry Leaders who have Servant-Leadership capabilities was implemented. Train the leaders, they train their team.

People wearing red lanyards are the Team Leaders: "Jesus with skin on". They are to be friendly and caring to those under them. Need to drop your attitude - no people with egos are allowed.

People who thought they couldn't do it were the ones we wanted - the people stretched to be a leader.

No people with power/control issues were selected (strong personalities.)

No people who wouldn't / couldn't follow directions were selected ("free agents".)

Common sense prevails! Leaders stand back and watch to see if people are doing a good job. Gently correct if needed.

Must be solid in the faith.

People who love people and who saw the vision were selected. They were the core group that were used to ignite the fire and promote the vision.

Helping Ministries:

A key part of the vision was to help others, show we care. Did little things like cheap Starbucks coffee after services, loaner umbrellas on hand, a team available to help people move, repair electrical & plumbing problems, free oil changes for single mothers. Barnabas Ministries coordinates who has a washer/dryer to give away and who needs one, etc.

Some people had to be trained on how to be nice! Didn't realize how they were perceived by others.

Was this easy??? NO!!!! Some people left their church. It took 2 years to become a natural part of the church.

They adopted a mission statement: "Connecting people with God and one another."

Home Churches:

Need to build community - can't do it just on Sunday; people are busy / have kids / things to do on Sunday.

Home churches fill the gap. They have a leader, are structured, have a purpose, but make it look natural!

Leader is somebody who has the heart of Jesus - a shepherd who has love for others.

Home churches are groups of 6-35 people, they split when the group gets to about 24; they train somebody from within the group to start another.

They meet once a month; somebody brings a dessert (or a meal) or it's pot luck. They eat together - a time for fellowship; They take prayer requests.

To get involved with a Home Church you check the box on the bulletin indicating an interest and turn it in to the office; someone calls and recommends a group near you or that meets your schedule.

Overcoming Obstacles:

People tend to be introverts in our society, aren't used to being shown kindness, and therefore are suspicious of it.

Some don't want to shake hands - because they have arthritis for example.

Some are shy, some are overbearing, some want to get involved for the notoriety.

Things to Remember:

The ministry needs a **complete** buy-in from **all levels**: every committee, every staff position, the diocese, the janitor - **everyone!!!**

All are trained. Servant Leaders: if you see there is no greeter -- put on a badge and go to serve. Jesus washed feet. Jesus models for us the attitude we should ALL have toward one another.

Think like a visitor!

What are they feeling when they walk through the door?

If you don't greet them and make them feel welcome, who will?

Does anybody know they're there?

Why should they come back?

Closing thoughts:

Jesus said "I give you a new commandment: love one another just as I have loved you."

If a man isn't able to love his brother (neighbor) who he is able to see, how is he able to love God who he can't see?

What changes are you willing to make personally in your life to make this happen -- to show love to others?

Do it with JOY!!!