



Prairie Lane Press

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Spiritual Renewal Theme

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The following is from the worship service on August 14 when I introduced our "Revival" series at church:

"Before we get started today, I want to show everyone something today that I am really excited about. Do you see this? A big bag of Seattle's Best Coffee, and there is more downstairs!! Earlier this summer, I mentioned to Jennifer that we should consider serving better quality coffee, instead of generic Folgers all the time. And so, this is a step in the right direction. We will be serving this coffee at church very soon and I'm happy about it. It's a good change for Prairie Lane.

However, I know that God did not call me to Prairie Lane Church and keep me here for the past decade so that I could help to improve our church's coffee situation. My first and most important job is to encourage spiritual growth.

Now, the problem with spiritual growth is that it is much more complicated than switching coffee brands. Changing coffee is simple, but honestly, it doesn't

REALLY matter for our church. No one should be choosing to attend a church-based on the coffee. It is what we would call a 'cosmetic change', and even hundreds of good cosmetic changes are not as important as spiritual changes.

These kinds of spiritual changes are hard because they require new ways of thinking, and new ways of acting. They are changes that require an intentional breaking away from old patterns. They are the kinds of changes that take real effort, self-reflection, and sacrifice. It might require a leap of faith, a new commitment to Jesus without even knowing where he might take you.

And, I know for myself, as we start a new ministry year at Prairie Lane, that I myself am in need of more spiritual change. I need spiritual renewal. I don't want

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What's New at PLC? 3 Ministry Updates



The training is winding up and we will be starting Stephen's Ministry this fall.

Vicki Vandergriend is our Stephen's Leader, and here are those who have been going through the training this summer: **Greg Kuipers, Ruth Moses, Mike Mruz & Vicki Hagen, Tanja Shelton, Fara Stanley, and Brenda VanderTuig.**

Here is some basic information, to know what "Stephen's Ministry" is about.

Stephen Ministry is the one-to-one lay caring ministry that takes place in congregations. Stephen Ministry congregations equip and empower lay caregivers—called Stephen Ministers—to provide high-quality, confidential, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting. *Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of*

Christ (Galatians 6:2, NRSV).

The best way to understand how Stephen Ministry works is to learn about three groups of people involved in this ministry: *Stephen Leaders, Stephen Ministers, and care receivers.*

Stephen Leaders establish and direct Stephen Ministry in a congregation. They—

- build awareness of Stephen Ministry within the congregation and community
- recruit and train Stephen Ministers
- meet with potential care receivers to assess their needs
- match care receivers with Stephen Ministers

People learn to serve as Stephen Leaders by attending a Leader's Training Course—a one-week conference that introduces the resources used to lead Stephen Ministry.

Stephen Ministers are congregation members trained by Stephen Leaders to offer high-quality, one-to-one Christian care to people going through tough times.

Care receivers are people—congregation members and others in the community—who receive care from a Stephen Minister. These are people struggling through a difficult time in life—experiencing grief, divorce, job loss, chronic or terminal illness, or some other life crisis.

Stephen's Ministry works in so many contexts because no matter the size of a congregation two factors remain constant. 1) There are always more people in need of care, than what a pastor alone can care for. 2) There are always gifted laypeople capable of providing high-quality Christian care—if trained and organized to do so.

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Spiritual Renewal *continued*

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to get complacent. I don't want to just do the same thing year after year and act the same way and be the same person. I want to grow. I want more spiritual vibrancy in my life, and I want to do a better job bringing spiritual vibrancy to Prairie Lane, and not only cosmetic changes.

This is why, I felt lead to do a sermon series on Revival. I want to think with all of you on the topic of spiritual maturity and vibrancy, and we will look at 5 areas for spiritual growth. These could be hard changes that will challenge us. They will require us to head into some new territory in our faith, perhaps explore new places. It's a good time as we are heading into a new season to consider some specific areas of our life where we can experience deep spiritual change."

Revival Sermon Series (August 14 – September 11):

Week 1 – Prayer: Seeking God's Face

Week 2 – Confession: Changing What You Cannot See

Week 3 – Fan into Flame God's Gifts

Week 4 – Faith and Deeds

Week 5 – Steps toward Spiritual Maturity

+ Praise and Prayer Event (date TBA)

3 Ministry Updates *continued*

2) Improving How PLC Church Council Functions

Another change that we have made at the council level is **clarifying roles and expectations of council members**. For some time, the church council has tried to put more emphasis on spiritual leadership and prayer into our meetings, and try to lessen the detail work and business items. However, since the council serves as a "church board", making those changes has been challenging. There is church business that needs to be done, and council meetings can end up spending more time on those items than what we intend.

It has also been observed that some council members enjoy the work of church business more than others. God makes us all different, and there are council members that do better connecting with people and reaching out to those with special needs and concerns. Others specialize more in administration. And, as a council we want to use people where they are gifted, with what they enjoy and to try to make serving on the church council a more meaningful experience.

So, we have decided to divide our council into administrative specialists and shepherding specialists. The administrative elders and deacons will meet more often to handle issues of church business. The shepherding elders and deacons will focus more of their time and energy into care-giving ministry. The shepherding elders will be working closely with the trained Stephen's Minister care-givers. In our plan, about 50% of the council meetings will include the whole team, but the other 50% will include only the administrative team.

Plus, starting this year we will nominate and select new council members with a specific role

in mind. Those who are nominated will be notified if they are being asked to serve in an administrative or in a shepherding role. We are also looking to tweak our election process to make for more meaningful involvement from the congregation in expressing preference between two qualified nominees.

In the past, we have considered these kinds of ideas before. Now, we have a specific policies in place that should make this council plan more sustainable into the future.



3) LIFEhouse

LIFEhouse is already entering into its third year of ministry. In our three years, we have improved our systems, policies and methods. The number of families that we serve has gradually increased over time. A few times this year, we have maxed out our waiting area space and our shelf space for food storage.

The board now sees that for LIFEhouse to continue to grow and open more often and serve more people, the most urgent next step for us to take is become more financially secure. We need to develop more monthly donors and more community partnerships. More clients means more food and diapers, and more food and diapers means more needed donations.

Celebrating our 2nd Anniversary next month, **we invite you all to our Chili Cook-off event Sunday September 25 at 5pm.**