

## Prayer Triad #1 Responses

Scripture Reading: Philippians 1:3-11

**Scripture Question: What thoughts about the church leap out of this reading and why?**

*Discussion from triads:*

- *The scripture conveyed the confidence that God's will shall be done*
- *Prayer, encouragement, love and action should be part of the church as well as praise to the Lord*
- *Spoke of Christ's imminent return and questioned if Bethany operated under the impression that Christ will return soon*

**Question 1: Do you think that our congregation has a clear passionate sense of who we are?**

- *Some of us felt that the congregation as a body has a clear sense of who we are as a church; however, most of us felt that individually we had a better sense of how we fit in the church and our purpose.*
- *Bethany is a giving congregation.*
- *We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.*
- *We as a church are very good about welcoming people into our church once they get there; however, we are not very good about inviting people to attend.*
- *This question involves how we began – our church was built on families and the largest membership seemed to be in the 1950s – but families in the community have changed and we now have a mix of the generations with “Builders” and “Silents” hoping to maintain the worship structure and traditions and “Generation Xers” wanting to begin new traditions. “Fix it so the young folks will want to come, but don't alienate the old folks.”*
- *As a congregation we have different opinions about who we are. Some believe us to be a small country church, but others do not see us that way. We are well educated and prosperous as a congregation.*
- *We stay true to the gospel and communicate the Word to others.*

**Question 2: Do we know what we believe and highly value?**

- *Make God the #1 priority. Emphasize the blood of Jesus in word and song.*
- *Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. We believe in God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We also believe in sharing these beliefs with others. We need to be especially thankful for God's gifts.*
- *We value the opportunity to practice the religion of our choice and to have communion and a relationship with God.*
- *Everyone in our church believes who we are as far as being children of God, but we are not as passionate in that belief as we could be.*
- *We value receiving communion each Sunday. We value baptism by immersion. Younger members of visitors might come because we can help them feel good when they leave. We highly value loving and caring for one another. Though we believe we are a friendly church, some effort on the part of more members of the congregation needs to be made to welcome visitors and new members.*
- *Some believe that we can only get to God our Father through his Holy Son, but others believe that it is not the only way. We believe that through knowledge we become more perfect*

*disciples. We value knowledge and intelligence. Our church appreciates that we have had knowledgeable and educated ministers.*

- *Prayer for all people and the church*

### **Question 3: Do we know where we are headed?**

- *Individually we may know where we are headed, but we need more definition as a group – a congregation. Ministering to others and our outreach ministry will be a very important role in where we are headed in the future.*
- *We envision a larger congregation.*
- *We don't think the church knows where we are headed. If we knew, this process wouldn't be needed.*
- *Some wish to have a less traditional service, but hope that future decisions won't be seen as disrespectful by the "Builder Generation." Some of "Generation X" do not like to serve on committees or attend meetings so we should be understanding of that and allow them the freedom to do what is comfortable for them to serve while encouraging them to understand the importance of serving together with others. Giving God two hours on Sunday morning is not too much to ask. The Gospel group is a bridge across the old and the new and when they sing it should shine through that the choir is happy and enjoying the music. Often the demographics of a community determine the way God is worshipped in church – Pamlico is mostly "Builders" and "Silents" so it is reasonable to assume that the church chooses to worship in a traditional way (valuing old hymns, having a formal structured service etc.)*
- *Being more loving encouraging and supporting of members. Paying more attention to shut-ins and members who are sick. Making sure to welcome visitors. Having more member participation in service with different members of the congregation taking turns.*
- *Attendance has not been as it has in the past. There are many things that may factor into this including a changing society. Discipline doesn't seem to be highly regarded anymore – it takes discipline to attend and be involved in church – and there appears to be a focus on entertainment. People want to be entertained, not interested, but the bar has been raised so much on entertainment that it is hard to hold people's attention. People don't seem to be interested in studying about things – is Bethany too cerebral for today's culture? Mega-churches seem to play on the emotions of people instead of appealing to their intellect. To up the "entertainment value" should we try streaming video of church? Would this reach people who don't like the structure of a formal church service?*
- *Currently we seem, as a culture to be too busy. We're not spiritually fruitful.*

### **Question 4: And how are we going to get there?**

- *Be careful who and what we support – the Bible is either all true or not true at all. Go to church expecting to meet God and focus on Him. Be more active in inviting newcomers and others to church with individuals taking time to send cards and show an interest instead of just members of the card or outreach committees. Show more pride in keeping the facilities neat and clean. Have leadership training in "soul-winning." Emphasize reading the Bible and studying it for all members. Utilize the Bethany website for a Bible study, but have face-to-face meetings as well. Get back to having a vibrant Sunday School by insisting that church leaders (elders and deacons) especially, but others as well, attend. Go back to having an assembly at the end of Sunday School, not just at the beginning.*
- *We don't know yet. We hope to find answers with help from the Visioning Committee.*

- *We are going through this transformational process to get there. If we are worried, try to fix it.*
- *We are hoping that through these prayer triads and this process we will be led in the right direction.*
- *Don't have a discernible plan, but new ideas may come. Encourage more people to come to church by building more personal relationships in the community and inviting those people to church. Have several church greeters. Make everyone feel very welcome.*
- *Dress more casually to make newcomers feel more comfortable. Visit other churches to get inspiration. Invite choirs from other churches (like African-American churches) to come in for a service.*
- *We don't think we clearly know where we want to go and how to get there. Many seem satisfied with sitting back and letting others handle everything. Some see this as people being afraid of looking silly or being apathetic. Bethany is not a HOT, on fire church – warm at best, but most likely cool. We are too conservative and not passionate. We are, however, a giving church.*
- *Pray for people to learn what talent they have to contribute.*