

FROM MICHAEL: REVIEW AND RE-THINK

Review:

A definition: 1. To look over, study, or examine again. 2. To consider retrospectively; look back on 3. To examine with an eye to criticism or correction. (American Heritage Dictionary)

The first two definitions are something that I do all of the time. They are easy. I like to look things over...especially things that I like. I have a picture of our now five kids--including spouses--on the wallpaper of my laptop computer and I look it over every time it shows up. It is a blessing to review that picture.

Looking back on good days and happy moments is something else I truly enjoy. To think about them and relive them is also a blessing.

The third definition is the difficult one. However, it is also one of which I make regular use. It is not as much fun but might be even more important. That is the purpose of this article.

It has been a year and a half since I began working as the Director of Family and Youth Ministry here at St John. When I accepted the position, I was told that the

congregation was ready to reach out to the families and youth of our community.

There certainly was a budget for it and My job description was very clear: "The Director of Family and Youth Ministry will be a resource person and advisor for the congregation within the areas which he/she ministers." Conversations with Pastor Berlin and the Board emphasized that I was to help the congregation reach out to the families in our community but not do the ministry on my own.

To that end, the Family and Youth Task Force and I took some very deliberate steps. We held several events as demonstrations of what could be done. We even met with some success in reaching the community when nine community families joined us for our picnic in Cascade park. We celebrated what God was doing and also made some connections with our school families. Our Easter Egg Hunts and VBS events grew and we touched families hearts. Our First Preschool Playday drew together nearly 50 people from our school. We have had our opportunities and there were some

additional helpers from the congregation (and they were a blessing!).

During that time, the Task Force and I spent over five months actively trying to enlist the cooperation of the congregation in our ministry. There were newsletter articles, personal appeals, bulletin announcements, general announcements, posters and bulletin boards, all working together to engage the congregation in the ministry so that I could serve as "a resource person and advisor for the congregation."

Following the final article in a newsletter, some of our Task Force members overheard comments like, "why does Michael keep asking for our help with family ministry? Isn't that what we hired him for?" I wish I had heard those comments because my loving answer would have been "no." We tried to help the congregation understand that without their support and willingness to surround the families that need us, there was no way the ministry would be successful. One person or even the whole Task Force could do very little compared to the number of people

available from our congregation...It hasn't happened.

Re-Think:

Some time ago--shortly after Pastor Berlin left us in January--I approached the Board to discuss the situation and suggested that Family and Youth Ministry might not be a demonstration of this congregations heart. Around that time, our Senior Exercise class started to grow and I saw a lot of energy and excitement over the number of community people that were in our building twice a week. Wondering aloud with the Board, we discussed the possibility that Senior Ministry might be the core of our hearts.

There are several reasons that I mentioned this idea to the Board. They include the fact that I have more ministry years behind me than in front of me, I sincerely desire to be part of a ministry that makes a difference and Senior Ministry might meet with more acceptance at St. John.

There are several churches in our area that are ministering to families. Beyond the Walls Church began about a year ago and has nearly 60 kids and over 150 people worshipping every Sunday. They are impacting their neighborhoods in a number of ways. Church of the Open Door is doing incredible things for families in their building and out in the community. These are just two of several in our area that are making a difference for families.

Pastor Jim has asked me to speculate on what a Senior Ministry might look like if I was to transition to it for the last year or so of my contract. I certainly have some ideas and will list a few here but only as ideas! Also, I would not be able to carry this ministry out on my own any more than I could a Family and Youth ministry. Again, the words of my job

description are clear: "a resource person and advisor." We all need to add ideas to this list.

Wouldn't it be exciting to see our Exercise Program expand even more? How about expanding it to daily offerings with a variety of trainers and programs. No one would be like our Linda--she is a one-of-a-kind--but she might not be available every day. As a resource person and advisor I could help organize even more fun events and activities. Any of the following would be great for our community:

- Widow/Widower support groups
- Computer Users Group for Retirees
- Pre-Retirement Workshops
- Healthy Eating in our Golden Years classes, clubs, workshops.
- Managing our Finances or workshops on changes in the tax code or to Medicare.
- Medical workshops could be set up to inform seniors on arthritis, cardiac concerns, Alzheimer's, cholesterol, blood pressure, etc.
- Self-Help Groups
- Grandparents and Grandchildren Fun Events
- Seniors Helping Seniors activity groups that assist with everything from car maintenance to house repairs.
- Interest Groups ranging from Book Clubs and Bike Riding to Card Clubs and Wine Tasters.
- Bible Study and Faith Sharing Groups.

The list of activities are endless and we could have this building full of seniors every day and night of the week. That is, if our members embrace the ministry and commit their time and talent along with their treasure.

It's something to think about! Michael < +