



Families with Children

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Lisa Heckman

Many in the Church have a long-held belief that churches will only grow with lots of families. Children are the future, after all. Yet, that is a misconception, a hold-over from the Baby Boom of the mid-twentieth century. Back then, belonging to a church was common practice, so the only potential new members were children. Another part of the misconception is that the young families will become long time members of a congregation. These misconceptions are not the reality of today. We are a mobile society, so families may not stay in the area to become the church of the future. Beyond that, there are many people of all ages already here in in our communities who hunger for God, but aren't connected to a church or worshiping fellowship.

If we only believe we are thriving when there are many young people involved in our ministry, then we will judge ourselves as failures if there aren't that many (or any) among us. We can encourage, enable, and celebrate the youth we have without always wanting more of them! There's nothing wrong, tho, in pursuing ministry to those in midlife, retirees, and the elderly instead primarily to youth. People beyond the raising families time of life exist both inside and outside our congregations. If that's who we are already, let's make that our ministry! Let's be the best we can be!

Vital ministry is not defined by who's sitting in our pews on Sunday morning. It comes from faithful engagement in doing the work of Jesus Christ. It comes when we "love one another as I have loved you." It comes when we reach out to the least, the lost, and the lonely. It comes when we seek to follow Jesus and do his will the best we can. And it comes when we let **Jesus** define what his will for us is, instead of trying to hold onto our pre-conceived notions of what "church" is supposed to be.

My prayer is that all of our congregations may uncover the potential for vitality already in your midst. Celebrate who you are and who you are called to be. And in the meantime, let go of preconceived ideas of what a church "should" be in order to embrace who God has made you to be right now.

Grace and Peace.

Lisa

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