

## *PK's Perspectives...* The Great Commission

I've heard stories about people who have so much money saved and invested they reach a point where they no longer have to work because they can live comfortably off of the interest their money generates. I can't count any of these people as friends; in fact, I'm fairly certain I've never even met a person who can truly live off the interest of their earnings. Truth be told, I can't even imagine such a scenario...I might be able to eat at Sugarberry's twice in a year if I was depending on my interest income to pay the tab!

I wonder if churches can grow to a point where their existence is somewhat guaranteed by the presence of an abundance of buildings, members, and reserve funds? Can a church lose sight of its divine mandate – The Great Commission - if it grows to a size where the programs become self-perpetuating and financial reserves can weather a season of economic uncertainty? I find it interesting that according to every church study/survey/interpretation of congregational spiritual health, young churches lead the way in ministry innovation, soul winning, and ministry fluidity while older churches tend to become rigid, less interested in the messy work of seeking the lost, and more interested in maintaining the balance of the apple cart.

Cochran FBC is an older church; we celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our church's founding in October of this year. I truly believe that an older church can also be a vibrant church that pursues the Great Commission with passion and perseverance. I also believe an older congregation has to work harder to stay focused on who we are and why we are. Here are some of the common characteristics clearly evident in vibrant, energetic churches of all ages and sizes:

- 1.** A unified vision of God's purpose for His church. Read Proverbs 29:18. Churches can easily grow into an assembly of special interest groups "doing their own thing" while overlooking the core mission of the Body of Christ.
- 2.** A commitment to excellence from top to bottom. Read Ecclesiastes 9:10 and 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 10:31. Many churches settle for less than their best, finding satisfaction in good enough. A vibrant church expects, and its members willingly offer, 110% because there is no greater quest than building God's Kingdom on earth.
- 3.** Accountability. Read Hebrews 10:24-25. This is related to #2 above. A vibrant church is willing to hold its members accountable for their commitments. If a person is unwilling to be held accountable, that's fine; but don't entrust such persons with positions of leadership or responsibility within the Body of Christ.
- 4.** An understanding that every Christian is a soul-winner. A vibrant church is comprised of members who take seriously the command of Jesus to "Go into all the world..." and make it a priority to share the Good News of Jesus.
- 5.** A commitment to grow as disciples; an awareness that we never reach "retirement" in our spiritual development; and comprehension that no amount of service is an acceptable substitute for personal prayer & Bible study.
- 6.** An attitude of "whatever it takes." Read Hebrews 12:1-2. A vibrant church looks at every obstacle as a challenge while seeking the wisdom and strength of God to meet the challenge head-on.
- 7.** An unshakable belief in the supernatural power and provision of God by His Holy Spirit. Read Ephesians 3:20, 2 Corinthians 12:9, and Mark 6:5-6.

Any church doing ministry on cruise control is a church in decline. As Rudyard Kipling once wrote, "Gardens are not made by singing 'Oh, how beautiful,' and sitting in the shade." I'll be looking to see you in Sunday School & Worship, PK.