

Where is our Church's focus right now?

Almost 100 years ago, English theologian, William Temple, said, "*The Church is the one organization that exists for the sake of non-members.*" In my work with churches over the years, I have found this statement to be very true. The churches that are dwindling spend most of their time focused on the needs and personal tastes of the current members. Worship, programs and various activities are mostly geared to keep the "club" members happy.

But growing churches stop the navel-gazing and insider focus, and look up and see the mission field all around them. Their hearts break with compassion for people who are hurting, for those who are lost, for those who need healing and hope. When push comes to shove, the non-member's needs take precedent over the current members needs. This attitude is very much in keeping with Jesus' words of losing ourselves for the sake of the Gospel and then finding ourselves in service to others. And paradoxically, members in these churches are much happier as they serve the community and spend much less time arguing over budgets, hymn selection or carpet color.

I believe Covid provides an incredible opportunity for churches to take the focus off themselves and reach out to the "non-members". We can't do many of the cherished insider activities we've done for years, so why not refocus that energy on the needs of those around us. Growing churches are not simply transporting what they always did online, but instead are providing online programs and resources that meet the needs of the group they are attempting to reach in the community. Just to give one example: one church is doing online forums for parents to help them navigate having children at home, doing long-distance learning. They are being for the community in a powerful way that is connecting with many people. The church is energized and the Spirit is moving!

Can this be a time for your church to take a fresh look at the neighborhood God has placed you in? Rather than seeing Covid simply as a time to "hold on until we can all meet again", might this be a time for a mission re-awakening. Could your church be the one organization that exists for its "non-members"?