

Great challenge facing the progressive church today:

How to creatively adapt to connect the next generations with God

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Changing Societal Trends

- Americans today are less likely to join *any* social institutions*
 - Church attendance down 50% since the 1950s
 - Attendance of any public meetings down 40%

*Putnam, R. (2001) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of the American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

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Changing Societal Trends

- Religious affiliation is down
- Alternative options for spirituality increased
- Sunday morning is no longer set aside by secular society
- Tithing is down, consumer debt is up
- More competition for donation dollars

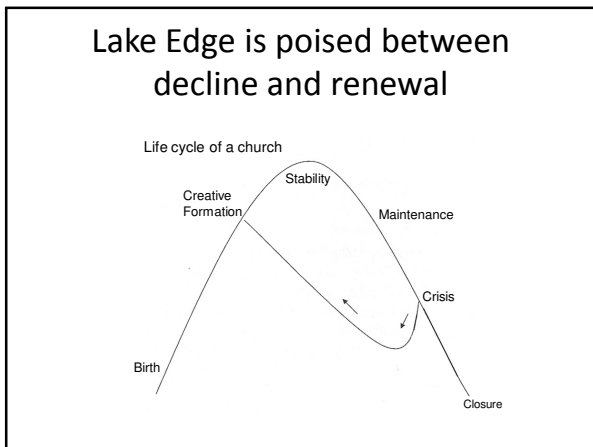
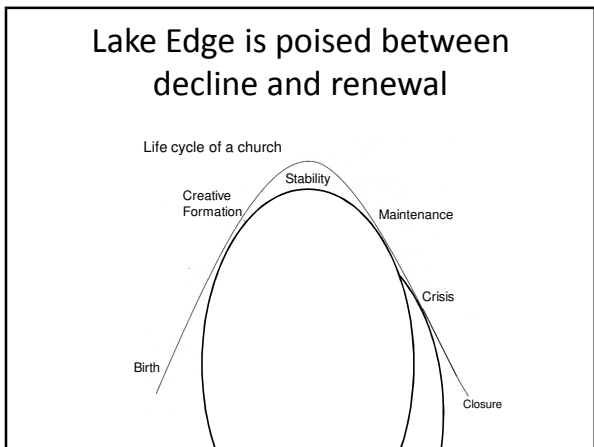
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
Lake Edge is at a crossroads

The next step....

...RENEWAL

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




Average congregation shifts from “disciple” focus to “consumer” focus


- Early: People join a movement
- Stability: People fulfill their own needs

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“The church seeking renewal must look beyond simply improving its programs and building... What’s renewed in congregational renewal is the people’s understanding of their relationship with God, their community and their sense of calling”

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Like many mainline churches, Lake Edge:

- Gradually shrunk to half its size
- Deferred maintenance on its building
- Struggled to keep up programming




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“Generally, congregations ignore the signs. Most congregations don’t think about renewal until life has reached, or is nearing, a state of crisis and confusion.”

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We are at a crisis point

- Departure of most key staff in 2006-07

Each left for unrelated personal reasons but the result was serious instability and loss of institutional memory in a staff-dependent church


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On top of that: Bad Timing

- Bad global economy
- Deferred maintenance catches up with us
- Senior Pastor Paul Shupe’s departure in 2009


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So....

- Many of our problems are not our fault
- We're normal
- We're healthier than ~70% of UCC churches today
- We have seeds of renewal
- God is with us

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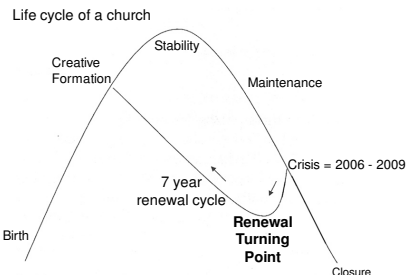


Our Reality

- We do have budget challenges
- Our building does have issues
- Society has changed
- We have to adapt
- The status quo is not an option
- God is still with us

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Lake Edge is poised between decline and renewal



Life cycle of a church

Birth, Creative Formation, Stability, Maintenance, Crisis = 2006 - 2009, Renewal Turning Point, Closure

7 year renewal cycle

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A Tale of Two Lake Edges


Which of these are we?

<p><u>Declining Churches</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal: grow and run the church. New members needed to continue a heritage. • Goal: participation in specific church programs. People participate in mission projects without having a mission. • Church seeks to get back to normal. • Leaders strive to keep the congregation happy 	Both	<p><u>Thriving Churches</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal: form disciples. Expect everyone to be in continuous spiritual formation. • Goal: nurture spiritual and faith development of people inside and outside the church. Constant innovation to meet those needs. • Church seeks opportunities to go in new directions. • Leaders strive to lead members to grow in faithful living.
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Lake Edge shows signs of both decline and renewal.

We are at a critical turning point.



Progressive Christianity as a whole is also at this turning point.

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Signs of Decline

- People have left
- 9 a.m. worship attendance has declined
- Sunday School attendance is down
- Pledges are down

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Signs of Renewal

- New people are joining
- 11 a.m. worship has grown steadily since 2007
- Core leaders demonstrate attributes of “thriving” churches
- High levels of commitment and energy
- Sense of openness to Holy Spirit
- Spirit of innovation and evangelism

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Spirit of renewal is widespread

- “Helping members deepen their relationship with God” and “Helping members discover their own gifts for ministry” are the top 2 priorities across Lake Edge*
- Sense of waking up and seeing what needs to be done

*Lake Edge Congregational Survey 2010

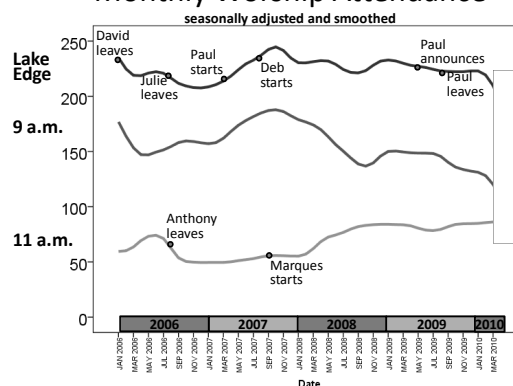
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Spirit of Renewal can be found...

- At both worship services
- In all key boards and teams
- In all age groups
- In our strategic plan
- Among new members and longtime members
- Among the people who were commissioned at the Celebration of Lay Ministry last year

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Monthly Worship Attendance



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Speaking notes slide, not shown

Worship at the Edge: Lake Edge's biggest renewal project

- Start 2005
- Goal: Reaching the unchurched
- Studied other contemporary worships
- Worked creatively with musicians
- Why? Unmet need for a contemporary worship format with a progressive theology

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Speaking notes slide, not shown

Lake Edge Growth

- Steady growth since 2007
- Much of this growth is new people
 - Based on new member percentages at each service, Amanda estimates 2/3 new people and 1/3 Lake Edgers who switched from 9 a.m.
- Survey shows Worship at the Edge is appealing to the kinds of people progressive church leaders expect the next generation of Christians to be like (see “Emerging at the Edge” handout for details)



“If you’ve ever remodeled a house while attempting to live in it, you have a sense of the chaos and complexity of congregational renewal.”



How does this affect the budget?

- Smaller budget is likely a new reality rather than a short-term problem
- Less people = less money
- Smaller organization is less cost-efficient
- But, attracting new members will not, by itself, grow the budget
- The goal is to spread the Gospel, not grow the budget

Speaking notes slide, not shown

“Your congregation is what it is today not because of what a bad pastor did to it, or because the neighborhood has changed, or because our culture is going to hell in a handbasket.”

Speaking notes slide, not shown

Although such things may have had an impact, your congregation is what it is today because of how it responded, or failed to respond, to the realities it faced.



“What your congregation will be in the future is up to you and how you work together to create something new from the realities you face.””



Speaking notes slide, not shown

What you do or don’t do now will make the difference. Your actions will either reinforce the patterns that have become established in your congregation or start to counter and shift them.

“For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth. The former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice *forever* in what I am creating...”

Isaiah 65:17-18a

Agenda

- Quorum
- Constituting prayer
- Accept annual report
- Revised budget
- Elect officers
- New business (announcements)

Revised 2010 Budget

- After prayerful consideration and lengthy deliberation the Cabinet recommends the congregation approve the changes to the 2010 operating budget as described in the May 10, 2010, congregational letter and e-mail.

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