



February 2018 Message

Dear North East District Family,

For the past two Saturdays, we had excellent training in relational, relevant evangelism with our Equip event. (Thank you to Pastor Don Thompson, our excellent design team, and the breakout session leaders.) During my opening talk I shared a quote from a Navy SEAL that goes something like this: when we face a crisis, we hope to rise to the occasion, but really we default to the level of our training. The reality is that we are facing uncharted territory that can feel like a crisis. (I actually think it's a great opportunity instead of a crisis, but I understand how it can feel that way.) I think most of our faith communities want to rise to the occasion, but instead we default to the level of our training.

Many of our clergy – including younger clergy – were trained by seminaries and courses of study to do church in the 1960s. Many of our laity are facing unknown territory in our post-Christian, post-modern world and default to what the church has always done. Unfortunately, neither is helping us.

The good news is that our uncharted territory – in my humble opinion – feels a lot like the environment described in the Book of Acts and all throughout Paul's letters. The even better news is that the church thrived in that environment launching a movement that has literally encompassed billions of people including all of us. We really can thrive in this new world, but it means we have to stop defaulting to our training. We have to learn new ways of meeting new people in new places and in new ways. We have to stop having events thinking it'll attract people and instead find places in our communities where we can go meet people, create authentic relationship, and then help them into a discipleship process. We have to pursue excellence in our worship while also embracing digital options like live streaming and Facebook Live and finding ways to create community online.

I want to encourage those of you who attended Equip, not to let the tyranny of the urgent outweigh the importance of being intentional about relational evangelism for your faith communities. Take what you have learned and sit down with your leadership teams. Begin the conversation of what you need to stop doing so you can realign resources to reaching new people. Failing to do so means you've chosen a future for your church that I call, "Last one out, turn out the light." I'm very sure that's not what Jesus has in mind for us.

Our district's Operational Team is happy to help you, please let us know what resources you might need. God bless you as you continue to forge new paths into a brave new world sharing Jesus' saving love and grace!

All God's love,