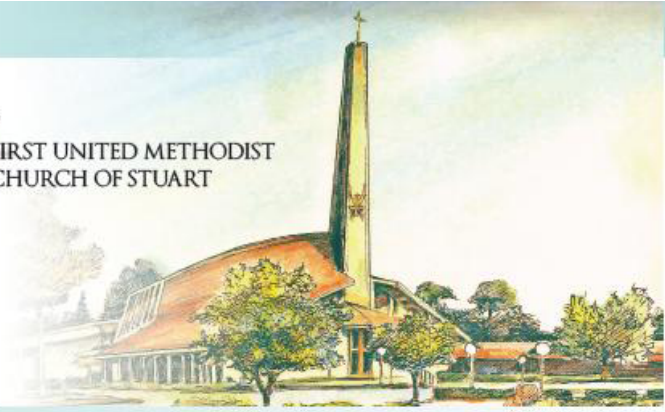


Steeple Echoes



FIRST UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH OF STUART



A Few Short Words...

August 2009

by Pastor Phillip Short

Christian Schwarz is a Christian from Germany who loves the church of Jesus Christ. His vision is to help churches get healthier. In order to find out how to do this, Schwarz studied churches of every size and on every continent. He has studied thousands of churches. Some were located in booming suburbs, some were set in ghettos, some were Catholic, others protestant, others still evangelical and Pentecostal. Some were in places where the Christian faith was being persecuted. Schwarz found that churches that were healthy had 8 things in common. These healthy churches had ...

1. Empowering Leadership—The church was led by leaders who identified leadership in others and saw to it that they were set up to lead themselves. They allowed new ministries to start as soon as needs and callings were identified.
2. Inspiring Worship—The presence of God was, and is, tangible.
3. Gift-Oriented Ministry—Those with the right spiritual gifts were teamed up with the needs requiring those spiritual gifts.
4. Holistic Small Groups—Small groups offered a setting for community, discipleship, and accountability. The church realized that it could be real in such a setting.
5. Passionate Spirituality—The people were in touch with God, not just during worship, but they were engaged in prayer, devotion, the means of grace, and the spiritual disciplines.
6. Need-Oriented Evangelism—The church was engaged in the community around the issue of faith-sharing. The people knew how to spot needs and then offer Christ and His church so as to make the difference.
7. Functional Structures—The church was engaged in short, medium, and long-range planning and communicating within and without.
8. Loving Relationships—The church was taking Christ most seriously, especially His new commandment: “Love one-another as I have loved you. As I have loved you, so you must love one-another.”

Schwarz noticed that healthy churches, either on purpose or by accident did these things.

Schwarz also noticed that when churches became unhealthy, they tended to double-up in the areas where they were already strong. Schwarz’s wisdom to less-than-healthy churches was counter to this wisdom. Water doesn’t run over the dam at the highest point of the dam, it runs over at the lowest point of the dam. He counseled churches to train their efforts and resources on their lowest, or minimum factor.

Churches should be healthy. Once they get healthy, they should be getting even healthier. How do we gauge our health and how can we figure out our “minimum factor?”

I’m glad you asked.

Schwarz developed a scientifically accurate questionnaire that will help develop a church’s minimum factor; even the Stuart First United Methodist Church’s minimum factor. Once this is identified, our Strategic Planning Team will know how to plan accordingly to raise the minimum factor. Once the minimum factor is “raised,” we will know where to concentrate next.

I am looking forward to this process of Natural Church Development. Rev. Jeff Stiggins from the Florida Annual Conference “Office of Congregational Transformation” will be coming to help us conduct the survey and will even be sharing his wisdom on how to address our minimum factor, whatever that may be. Jeff is a good friend. He is an effective pastor and has made some great turn-arounds in several local churches. No, he is not a consultant, and no, we aren’t going to pay him anything except travel expenses back-and-forth to Lakeland. You are sure to love him and you are sure to be excited as we as a church get healthier and healthier!

>< Love!

Rev. Phillip Short

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