

Message from the Executive Minister

Transparency and Trust

Essential to the vitality of any organization including the church, is trust. If church members don't trust their leadership (lay and clergy) little growth will occur. By growth, I am referring to both spiritual growth and numerical growth. Look at it this way: Would you want to invite your friends to a church you cannot trust?

If there is not trust the commitment to the church will always be tentative. That diminished commitment shows up in the amount of time one is willing to invest and the amount of financial resource one is willing to contribute.

One simple way to assure trust is through transparency. One member of an area church recently told me how her new church encouraged greater generosity on her part because the offering and designated giving amounts were published in the following Sunday's bulletin. She reported, "At my former church I was never sure that my tithes and offerings went to where I wanted them to go. Here I can see that every gift is accounted for." In contrast another member reported how he was on the edge of leaving his church because there were too many secrets. "I think every member should be told about important matters in the church. Only a few seem to be in the know at my church."

Transparency can seem risky for some. People question whether everyone can handle the truth. But the cost of the alternative is too great in terms of the erosion of trust. In most situations the fear of disclosure turns out to quickly dissipate as those receiving the news end up appreciating the honesty.

Certainly there are some matters that must be kept confidential. However, those matters usually are restricted to personnel issues or contractual matters, which have not yet been solidified. Most other items can be and should be shared. One principle that is recommended is to solicit input from everyone who is affected by the decisions before they are made. If you ask before a decision is made the message received is "You are important." If informed after a church decision is made the message received is the opposite... "I am not important."

So once again, the lesson most of us learned in Kindergarten continues to ring true: "Honesty is the best policy." When transparency is a regular practice in the church a foundation of trust is established. When trust is the foundation the church will be strengthened.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alan A. Newton". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Blessings,".