A New Day in Your Congregation

Pruning
William Sloane Coffin once wrote, “Most church boats don’t like to be rocked; they prefer to lie at anchor rather than go places in stormy seas. But that’s because we Christians view the Church as the object of our love instead of the subject and instrument of God’s. Faith cannot be passive; it has to go forth—to assault the conscience, excite the imagination. Faith fans the flames of creativity altogether as much as it banks the fires of sin.”
The Story of Mount Vernon Place
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The 2005 Leadership Team
A Courageous Choice
Moving Out

[Images of people moving furniture and a Mayflower truck parked outside a building]
Burning the Pasture
Ree Drummond

The first pasture wasn't burned this year. You can see the fresh spring grass growing, but it's having to fight the old stuff for space. The second pasture was burned in late March and it's growing back thick and lush. We don't burn every pasture every year; it's a cycle on the ranch. So I always love these moments in May when the difference is stark and dramatic.
Which picture best captures your congregation?

The Power of Pruning
I am the true vine, and my Father is the vineyard keeper. He removes any of my branches that don’t produce fruit, and he trims any branch that produces fruit so that it will produce even more fruit.

- John 15:1-2
If your congregation were a petunia, how much agreement would there be in the congregation about which parts of your ministry or mission are the dying blossoms that need to be removed?
“Unlike known or routine problem solving for which past ways of thinking, relating, and operating are sufficient for achieving good outcomes, adaptive work demands three very tough, human tasks: figuring out what to conserve from past practices, figuring out what to discard from past practices, and inventing new ways that build from the best of the past.”

What is the best of your church’s past?
What miracles have taken place?
What do you need to discard?
“Pruning involves taking off not only dead, lifeless branches but also those stems that still have life but that may nevertheless inhibit the overall strength and production of the larger vine.”

- Emily Askew

• Where are clergy and lay leaders investing their time and attention?
• What is yielding fruit and what is draining resources, both spiritual and material?
• What two things could you stop doing today without many people noticing?
What do you offer?

• Who would notice if your church no longer existed?

• What ministries of your church does the community count on?

• Which ones would few people miss?
Time to Inventory

• List everything your congregation does.
• Which things are at the heart of who you are as a congregation?
• Which are peripheral?
• Which things are making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world?
“Everything you love for its own sake, outside of God alone, blinds your intellect and destroys your judgment of moral values. It vitiates your choices so that you cannot clearly distinguish good from evil and you do not truly know God’s will.”

- Thomas Merton
• How much of our church building and its contents do we love for our sake instead of for God’s sake?
• How much of what we do in and for the church is for our own sake instead of for God’s sake?
• What traditions do we love that have everything to do with our personal preferences or hard work and nothing to do with Jesus’ efforts to change and transform the world?
• What would we do if we were working for Christ’s sake alone?

- A New Day in the City, 13-14
How might we evaluate ministry in our context?

- Why did this ministry start?
- Why does it continue today?
- How many people are impacted by it each week?
- How many church members are investing time and talent to see it thrive?
- Is this ministry still meeting a real need?
- Why do we invest church resources in this ministry?
- Does this ministry align with our vision and our values?
How can you build on the best of your church’s past?
Let it Go!