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Building Better Partnerships

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Worship Symposium 2013
January 25-26, 2013
C10 - *“Building Better Partnerships”*
Norma deWaal Malefyt and Howard Vanderwell

Identifying the Challenges:

1. Working together takes grace!
2. The average church is a composite of many fragile partnerships.
3. Poor partnerships have consequences.

The Benefits of Healthy Partnerships

1. Vastly increased productivity and effectiveness in ministry and leadership.
2. A wider range of insight, knowledge, problem-solving is available.

3. A healthy corrective is in place against imbalance or one-sidedness.

4. A model for Christian behavior of accepting/affirming each other and working together.

5. Each participant finds their work/service more satisfying and fulfilling.

Building Blocks for Healthy Partnerships

1. TRUST – Takes time

2. RESPECT – Even where there are differences from our training, background, traditions...

3. ACCEPT - There are different ways of experiencing the “holy”.

4. AVOID – Practices that Damage Relationships

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Common Expectations for Partnerships

1. A healthy and mature spiritual life of growing in grace and love.
2. That each possesses an accurate and biblical understanding of the worship life of the church.
3. A basic competence and a commitment to growth in worship and its issues.
4. A willingness to submit personal concerns and preferences to the greater good of the long-term life of the congregation.
5. A pastoral sensitivity to the life experiences and needs of worshipers.
6. An ability to communicate openly and honestly.
7. An ability to establish relationships that exhibit both trust and respect.
8. Each makes worship a priority area.
9. Each will exhibit a willingness to meet regularly and fulfill assigned tasks.

Specific Suggestions from Our Experiences

1. Pray together.
2. Make all planning conversations and decisions face-to-face.
3. Set priority scheduled time for meeting and planning.
4. Make time together adequate, not rushed.
5. Attend learning events and study together.
6. Aim to grow in each other's areas.
7. Share resources.

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Discussion of Case Studies

Case #1

Rosa’s planning team is very important to her. She’s excited to be part of the worship planning of her congregation and has been very pleased with the team who joined her. Generally their meetings together are productive and she finds them very satisfying. But lately the level of frustration has risen for her. Five members of the team meet together every other week to contribute their ideas; but lately one of the members has become increasingly negative. Most listen to each other well and work through their differing ideas. But lately Clark, the Director of Youth, sits there with his arms folded during the discussion, contributing very little, and finally states flatly, “That just won’t work; I meet with the young people and they just won’t go for it.” His words silence others and kill discussion. Rosa is frustrated, and sees the spirit of the whole group gradually eroding.

- what seems to be the key problem here?
- what do you think can be done to restore the partnership within the team?

Case #2

Marie and Jack have been co-pastors at Wellspring Church for seven years now. They have always worked together compatibly, sharing the duties of ministry equally, investing great effort in planning their worship. They aim to integrate music, art, and the youth of the congregation. The congregation was enthused because they knew that Marie and Jack would provide enthusiastic and creative leadership. But after a couple years of work on this, things are slipping. Planning sessions are getting shorter; tasks go undone; occasionally meetings are even cancelled. Finally, after some awkward discussions in the meeting last night, Marie put her finger on the problem (with a few tears) when she said, “we are just so tired; we’re running out of time; our report is due soon and we’re still trying to finish details; our poster has to be designed; and I’m feeling terribly overwhelmed and burned out!”

- what suggestions would you make to this group?
- what suggestions would you make to help other groups avoid this?

Case #3

Last night the worship planning team from Crestview Church held their regular meeting. At each such meeting, members spend a short time reviewing and evaluating several worship services. Sometimes this discussion is open and helpful: but sometimes it seems that none of the members have much to say. Last night was one of those “quiet nights”. That was frustrating to Stan and Ina. As preaching pastor and music director, they were eager for feedback from others. But what bothered them even more was seeing several members of the team standing by their cars in the parking lot, long after the meeting was done, engaged in animated conversation.

-if you were Stan or Ina, would you be concerned?

-would you do anything to address this....if so, what?

Case #4

Julia has been the worship coordinator for her church for the past few years. She finds the role generally very satisfying. She has always found it fulfilling to plan thoughtful services which use the gifts of others. It's important to her that all the elements of the service flow and develop a theme. But her big frustration has been trying to get adequate information from her pastor ahead of time. She has carefully tried to ask to receive information about his sermon at least two weeks ahead of time. Sometimes that happens; sometimes it doesn't. But last week was a disaster! She had Pastor Jeff's sermon information, the Scripture passage, even a few songs a week and a half in advance. So Julia planned the service. She planned to incorporate the 3rd graders from the congregation in a reader's theatre of the Scripture for the sermon. She rehearsed with them Thursday afternoon after school, arranging for snacks and rides for their convenience. But then on Saturday, she discovered that Jeff had changed his mind – Scripture was changed, the sermon was changed, and the songs no longer fit. And nobody said a word to her about that!

-what would you really like to do/say?