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Negativity vs. Positivity in the Church

Someone recently told me that they refuse to serve on their church board because of all of the negativity. Subsequently I inquired further about what they meant by “negativity” and exactly why they felt so adamant about not serving the church. According to this person’s experience and observations, comments at their board meeting were constantly negative with lots of distrustful statements about other church members. They left board meetings feeling more stressed and depressed than when they arrived at the meeting. Furthermore, they felt that the board meeting was not a safe place to share your true feelings about any situation or issue being discussed. To them, at least, church board meetings are a complete waste of their time and only a few people had a “voice” to shape and inform decisions. At this particular church, there were 2 or 3 people who felt they were more “spiritual” with “2 more IQ points” than anyone else.

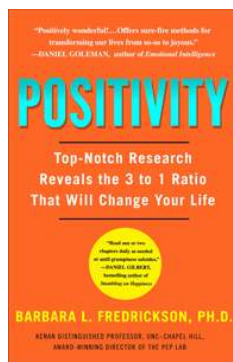
I am not sure how many others have a similar feeling about serving on church boards or committees but I am aware of how negativity can destroy any joyful experience in a congregation. I have actually experienced a church board meeting when people were yelling at each other and talking like Philistines. On another occasion, I was called into a meeting to teach people how to listen and share their thoughts without fear that someone would negate what they had to say. Although I can’t accurately pinpoint where “church negativity” originates, I do know that it is probably not what Jesus had in mind when he said, “Love one another as I have loved you.”

Maybe the issue is that we really can’t grasp how much Jesus loves us. Or perhaps we are more interested in having our opinion expressed than we are in listening to the opinions of others. It could also be that we are more negative than positive. This seems to fit what neuroscientists are telling us about how our brains are more willing to “track” negativity than positivity.

Each day we experience positive and negative moments which often dictate how we feel about ourselves, our workplace and even our church. Now scientists are able to track our positive to negative moments. Dr. John Gottman, world renowned for his research on marriage stability and divorce predictions of thousands of couples, named it “the magic ratio.” The magic ratio is 5:1, and with 94% accuracy, Dr. Gottman can predict in one 15-minute interview if a couple will remain together or be divorced within 10 years. By observing couples and scoring their positive to negative interactions, Dr. Gottman’s 5:1 ratio of positive to negative reveals how successful marriages will be.

Other scientists have observed the positive to negative ratio in workgroups. Most notable is the work by Dr. Barbara Frederickson. Her research reveals the “tipping point” for positive to negative to be 3:1. In other words, for any group to “flourish” there needs to be a ratio of 3 positive interactions to every 1 negative interaction. Dr. Frederickson’s research has discovered what many of us already know, i.e., Positivity leads people to achieve great things while tapping into our own unique resources, talents and God-given gifts. In her recent book, *Positivity*, Dr. Frederickson shares how our state of mind and positive emotions can improve our health, relieve depression and broaden our minds.

Dr. Frederickson has a website where she has posted an online Positivity Self Test for people to measure their own positivity ratio. If you are interested in finding out how your past day felt, simply go to www.positivityratio.com. It would be interesting to hear how positive people view their church board and committee meetings by using the positivity ratio questionnaire.



Don Booz

District Executive Minister

THE PARISH PAPER

IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FOR ACTIVE CONGREGATIONS

Co-editors: Herb Miller, Lyle E. Schaller, Cynthia Woolever – www.TheParishPaper.com

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Where Are the Unchurched?

About half of all Americans are affiliated with a church or congregation.¹ However, some parts of the country—like the Northeast, New Mexico, and Texas—with high percentages of Catholics, boast high affiliation rates. In these places, a congregation of some kind claims almost 59 percent of the population. Some upper Midwestern states—Nebraska, the Dakotas, Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin—are also highly churched. Western states typically show the lowest affiliation rates.

American congregational geography reveals a church landscape marked by dispersion and concentration. Churches affiliated with the largest U.S. denominations are not uniformly spread across the country.

Dispersion: Of 236 major U.S. religious organizations, only twenty-one denominational groups report adherents in all fifty states and the District of Columbia.

Concentration: Yet many of these twenty-one denominational groups' adherents are also extremely concentrated geographically. All twenty-one groups report that at least half of their adherents live in just ten states. Here are some of the major differences in denominational dispersion and concentration patterns.

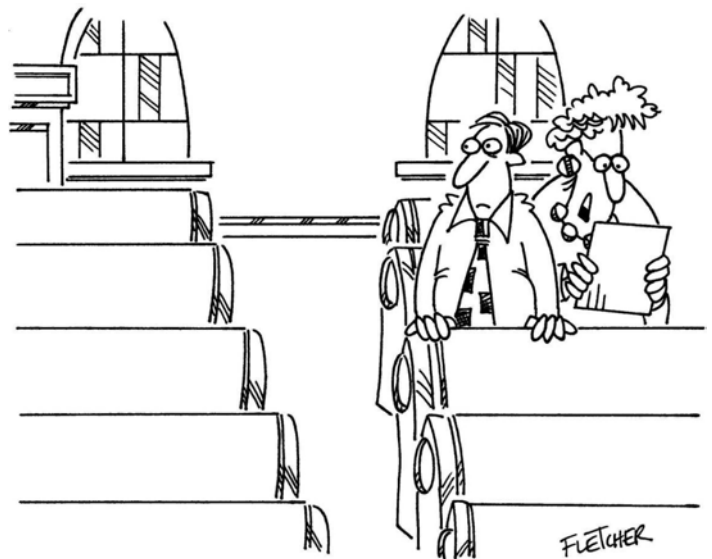
- United Methodists and Unitarian/Universalists are the *least* concentrated geographically (55% and 54% of their adherents, respectively, reside in just ten states).
- Other groups are slightly more concentrated, such as the Salvation Army and Presbyterians (58% of adherents reside in just ten states).
- Much more concentrated than other groups are Churches of Christ and Southern Baptists (72% and 75% of adherents, respectively, reside in just ten states).
- Muslims are *most* concentrated (86% of adherents reside in just ten states), with Mormons following not far behind (76% of adherents reside in just ten states). One in three Mormons resides in Utah.

The dispersion and concentration of religious groups affects how their members feel. Worshipers in low-concentration regions of their denomination may feel like outsiders or an overlooked minority. At the same time, holding a unique religious status in the community can fuel a cohesive, congregational identity and a strong sense of belonging among members.

The dispersion-concentration factor influences what effective congregations *do* as well. What works in one church setting will not necessarily work in another community with a different religious geography.²

Updating the Religion Atlas

In 1952, religious demographers began collecting information on congregations and adherents for every state and county. The Religion Census replicated that effort in 1971, 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010. Their most recent census identifies 344,984 congregations with a total of just over 150 million adherents.



THESE NEW STATISTICS SAY OUR CHURCH IS REALLY POPULAR WITH PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE BUT DON'T BELONG.

The Religion Census shows that Mormons (Latterday Saints), Muslims, and nondenominational Christians are on the rise across the country. In fact, the Mormon denomination is the fastest growing group in about one-third of the states. The Muslim population is growing at a faster rate than the general population, which grew about 10 percent between 2000 and 2010. Other faith groups experiencing significant growth include Pentecostals, Evangelicals, and Unitarian Universalists. Both Buddhists and Hindus have temples in most states now—adding to greater religious diversity in the western states and northern New England.

The new census also brings to light the impressive size of the nondenominational movement. Nondenominational and independent churches are now the third largest faith group, with more than 12 million adherents, claiming 4 percent of the U.S. population.³ In 48 states, nondenominational churches rank in the top five religious groups.

Americans Are Spiritual but Unchurched

This news challenges any prevailing myth that there is no one for churches to reach in their community. The past decade of change often hinders church leaders from a current feel for how many of their neighbors are unchurched. Members can also lose track of who really lives around the church.

Many people identify themselves as Christian, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, or something else, yet do not affiliate with a specific church, parish, temple, or mosque.⁴ The rising tide of unaffiliated Americans is not evidence of increasing secularism because polls consistently show that most adults still believe in a personal God (seven out of ten adults). Why people continue to believe but decline to belong is an important question for all faith communities. This new information leads us to ask the right kinds of questions about the people in our community and can direct our focus outward. The essential jump is from this new information to action.

Map the Unchurched in Your Community

The Religion Census website provides information for every county in the U.S., and allows users to chart religious trends in their community. The website also displays national maps that show the geographic concentration of all major denominations.

First, go to www.thearda.com/rcms2010/ and select the county where your church is located. Next, make a list of the ten largest denominational groups in your county based on the number of adherents in 2010. Also record the number of adherents for each of

these top ten denominations and the percentage of the county population the number represents.⁵ (The website displays this information.) Finally, discuss with your leadership group:

- How does the unaffiliated percentage in our county compare to the national average of 49 percent unaffiliated?
- Compare the 2010 report to the report from 2000 on the website. Are the county's *largest* faith groups growing or declining in number of adherents? Is our congregation in one of the largest denominations?
- What implications does this growth or decline have for our congregation?
- In what ways does the religious makeup of our region influence how worshipers feel about their affiliation with our congregation?
- In what other ways does the religious profile of our county shape our congregation's ministries?

The Bottom Line

Each congregation's ministry occupies a niche within a specific religious landscape. Every church location holds the potential to be "a holy place because the reign of God can come anywhere. For Jesus, the holiness of a place is dependent . . . on whether the signs of the kingdom's presence are there."⁶ Is your congregation called to be a local expression of the kingdom of God? What is God's intention for your congregation in this place?

1. Information in this article is from *2010 U.S. Religion Census: The Religious Congregations and Membership Study* (Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies: 2012), www.thearda.com/rcms2010/.
2. Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *Places of Promise: Finding Strength in Your Congregation's Location* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 27.
3. In comparison, the United Methodist Church membership claims about 3 percent of the U.S. population.
4. Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual, but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
5. Trey Hammond's "Leader Guide for Places of Promise" provides a worksheet for this exercise (<http://www.uscongregations.org/pdf/leaderguide.pdf>), 22-24. The guide has other sessions to help groups develop a local theology of place.
6. Robert M. Hamma, *Landscapes of the Soul: A Spirituality of Place* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1999), 84.

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District Youth Event

Check this Schedule, then Register !

www.pswdcob.org/distconf



Friday, November 9

- 6:40 pm - Meet in Lobby For Worship
- 6:45 pm - Worship
- 8:30 pm - **Red Rope Reception** & Get To Know You
- 10:00 pm - Middle Schooler's Get Picked Up
- 10:00 pm - Senior High & Chaperones Showers/Sleepover
- 11:00 pm - Lights Out



Becky Ullom

Saturday, November 10

- 8:00 am - Jr. and Sr. High Breakfast
- 9:00 am - Opening Business / Introduction of Youth Cabinet
- 9:30 am - Bible Study Matthew 25:35-40
- 11:00 am - Bus To Beach
- 12:00 pm - Lunch & Fun on the Beach
- 4:00 pm - Bus Back To Hillcrest
- 5:30 pm - Dinner with Becky Ullom, topic "Connecting Youth"
- 6:45 pm - Worship - Youth Cabinet Ushers

- 8:30 pm - Free Time In The Red Rope Lounge
- 10:00 pm - Middle Schooler's Get Picked Up
- 10:00 pm - Senior High & Chaperones Showers/Sleepover
- 11:00 pm - Lights Out

Sunday, November 11

- 9:00 am - Jr. and Sr. High Breakfast / Sunday School
- 10:00 am - Youth & Chaperones walk to La Verne CoB for Worship
- 10:30 am - Closing Worship
- 12:00 pm - Good-Bye's

Youth Event Registration closes October 19



Youth at last year's event

photo by John Jackson

Conference Business

Saturday, November 10, 2012

www.pswdcob.org/distconf/business-book

The print edition of this year's Business Book will mail in early October to each church for their delegates to take home and read before conference. There will be a printed copy at conference for all registrants. Anyone can study the New Business items on the web:

- Approve the 2011 District Conference Minutes
- Ballot: from the Nominating Committee
- By Laws Change: Program Committee
- By Laws Change: Nominating Committee
- Resolution: Church Planting
- Resolution: Church Revitalization
- Ministry Investment Plan – 2013 Finances

Conference Worship Services

Friday Evening at Hillcrest

- 6:45pm Gathering Music – 7:00pm Worship
- Speaker: District Moderator Jack Storne

Saturday Evening at Hillcrest

- 7:15pm Gathering Music – 7:30pm Worship
- Speaker: General Secretary Stan Noffsinger

Sunday Worship at La Verne Church of the Brethren

- 10:15am Gathering Music – 10:30am Worship
- Keynote Speaker: Dr. Richard Ward
 - o Consecration of Licensed Ministers
 - o Recognition of ordination anniversaries
 - o Installation of Leadership for 2013

Children's Activities

Saturday: During business and insight sessions

- 8:15am-Noon
- 12:45-6:00pm
- Includes: Games, crafts, Bible stories and other exciting activities.
- All meals are with parents. You will pickup your child for the lunch period.
- Worship times with parents.




You must register for Children's Activities by the registration deadline of October 19th so that we can plan for enough volunteers based on the number of children registered.

Not available with on-site registration

PSWD Youth . . .

Dawna Welch, PSWD Youth Advisor
Youth@pswdcob.org



Meet the New 2012 / 2013 Youth Cabinet

Sitting around a table in the PSWD office, 6 youth from throughout Arizona and California met each other for the first time as the new 2012/2013 Youth Cabinet. The members are:

- Josalyn Romero (Circle of Peace, Peoria AZ)
- Jake Hoover (La Verne)
- Joshua Roy (Modesto)
- Mollie Montgomery (Bakersfield)
- Israel Rosas (Glendale)
- Michael Terry (Live Oak)

Cabinet members as in the list above

photos by D. Welch



September Planning Meeting & Retreat

The opening exercise introduced the cabinet members to one another from the inside out! They perused magazines looking for images, words or phrases that describe their



outward life, the image they present to the world. Next they selected images, words, or phrases that described their inner life, the person one is in their heart. During the process they talked, laughed and shared ideas with one another, immediately displaying collaborative skills! Finally cabinet members created individual collages and took turns describing their creations.



Enjoying Hillcrest's ambiance, which attendees of all ages will enjoy at District Conference.

With a foundation of community established, the cabinet launched into a study of the 2012 District Conference theme and supporting scripture, toured the Hillcrest facilities and identified gathering space for youth. The cabinet members reviewed comments from the 2011 District Conference youth evaluations to help in planning the conference schedule and activities. Highlights of the schedule for youth

activity attendees can be found on page 4 and on the back cover. When Youth register for conference online, they can order a t-shirt designed by the cabinet which features the cabinet's own scriptural emphasis for the weekend: "So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." Romans 12:5

Make sure the youth of your congregation (and their friends) register for this fun, promising gathering among the youth of the PSWD!

Questions? Call or email Dawna Welch
 909-267-5477 youth@pswdcob.org

Find details on District Conference Youth activities at:
www.pswdcob.org/youth

Find registration details at:
www.pswdcob.org/distconf



Michael, Joshua, Jake, Israel, Mollie, Josalyn
 In front of the District Office at Hillcrest in La Verne.

Moderator . . .

Jack Storne, Live Oak Church of the Brethren
storne260@comcast.net



The logo for our 2012 District Conference represents our service to Christ and for Christ. The hands circling the “globe” represent our global dedication to serving God’s children wherever there is a need and we are welcomed. With God’s help and blessing we also serve in places that are hostile to God’s word. As the hands show, our service



is given by women and men alike and by all races. We serve with and through diversity. The cross represents Christ in whose name we offer our service. It also represents our devotion to Christ, the recognition of his call to serve our brothers and sisters, including “the least” of them (Matthew 25: 34-40). The praying hands

indicate our prayers for those who serve, our prayers for the direction of God’s will and our prayers of devotion and worship of our living and loving savior. May we be:

People Serving With Devotion

Matthew 25:35-40

Insight Sessions

Saturday, (1)Morning & (2)Afternoon

(1a) Ministry Investment Plan & District Finances

Before you vote, come and join our discussion about the district’s “Ministry Investment Plan.” Plan to attend this Stewards Commission presentation.

(1b) Resolution: Church Planting, What is it? Why do we need it?

The Church Plant and Revitalization Committee (CPR) resolution is a call for the Pacific Southwest District to be deliberate about church plants. The CPR is aware that PSWD has tried a variety of church plants in the past with limited success. The CPR is also aware that church planting requires some intentionality and creativity in order to be successful. Lots of new church models are now available to us as well as a variety of fluid and diverse patterns for expressing our faith.

(1c) Changes & Challenges of Youth Ministry; A Creative Solutions Conversation – Presenter: Becky Ullom, National Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Church of the Brethren.

Have you ever planned a youth event only to have one student show? Have you been frustrated by inconsistent attendance on Sunday mornings that makes planning a

nightmare? Do you ever feel like you are not making a difference? IF you answered yes to any of these questions you might be a Youth Worker! Ms. Ullom will lead us in discussion and help us think collaboratively toward re-imagining a new and dynamic future with young people in our congregations. Bring your frustrations and your successes so that we may learn and support one another!

(1d) Help! There’s Too Much Month at the End of My Money! – Presenter: Steve Mason, Director of Brethren Foundation Inc.

Do you have trouble making ends meet at the end of a pay period? Look at cash management and budgeting from a Christian perspective, with an eye toward stewardship and simple living. Get to know the difference between financial planning and budgeting, and find out how to do both.

(2a) Difficult Situations . . . What do I say?

We all have experienced those awkward, tongue-tied moments when facing difficult situations, sometimes saying the wrong thing, or even avoiding the situations or persons all together. This session will focus on practical ways to manage difficult/stressful situations and conversations with people who are hurting, grieving, or sick, and how our words and actions can be comforting or hurtful.

Presenter: Kirsten Storne-Piazza. Kirsten has a BA in Psychology, a Masters in Counseling, and is a state licensed Marriage & Family Therapist. Currently Kirsten is Director of Specialty Services and a Counseling Provider at Briggs-Gridley Memorial Hospital.

(2b) Understanding the Resolution: Church Revitalization – Presenter: Church Planting and Revitalization Committee (CPR)

The resolution on Revitalization is a call for the Pacific Southwest District to intentionally focus on the revitalization of our congregations. The CPR plans to share bits and pieces of the soon-to-be released Church Diagnostic Manual that will help take a past, current and future pulse of a congregation. The CPR is aware that few congregations move from sickness to heal but we are committed to help congregations learn how to focus on a radical obedience to God.

(2c) Grant Review Committee Q & A with Mike Wolfson, GRC Chair and members of the GRC. They will present the guidelines for grants and be available to answer questions about the application and reporting processes.

(2d) Everyone Has One . . . What Will You Do With Yours? – Presenter: Steve Mason, Director of Brethren Foundation Inc.

If you’re not sure, attend this session. You’ll get a very basic review of things to think about as you consider what to do with everything you have accumulated during your lifetime. This session is only for the mortal.



District Conference November 9-11, 2012 at Hillcrest in La Verne

www.pswdcob.org/distconf

Details on the web

Reserve your motel early ! *The fairgrounds have an event the same weekend.*

Ask for a reservation under: PSWD Church of the Brethren, 2705 Mountain View Dr. 91750

Motels with special PSWD rate	Miles	Rate (taxes will be added)	Amenities
Extended Stay America. . . . (909) 394-1022 601 W Bonita Ave San Dimas CA	2.6	Rate increases October 26 \$95.99 (2) Full beds \$75.99 (1) King	Grab-N-Go Breakfast
Red Roof Inn. (909) 599-2362 204 Village Ct San Dimas CA	3.0	Rate increases November 1 \$79.99 (2) Queens \$69.99 (1) King	
Double Tree. (909) 626-2411 555 W Foothill Blvd Claremont CA	3.8	Rate increases October 26 \$109.00 (2) Queens	On-Site Restaurant Pool Spa
Best Western. (626) 335-2817 625 E Route 66 Glendora CA	6.1	Rate increases October 9 \$118.99 (2) Queens \$110.49 (1) King	Hot Breakfast
Shilo Inn Hotel. (909) 598-0073 3200 Temple Ave Pomona CA	7.8	Rate increases October 26 \$85.00 (2) Queens \$79.00 (1) King \$100.00 deposit	Continental Breakfast

Meeting the Bible Again – for a Second Time! a Preaching & Public Speaking Workshop

Dr. Richard Ward is professor of Preaching and Worship at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, OK. He brings to the study of preaching a rich background in performance studies and practices. He is particularly interested in the arts of storytelling and oral interpretation of scripture as they inform and enrich the ministry of preaching.



Dr. Richard F. Ward

In our time together we will refresh our relationship with the Bible through storytelling, story listening, journaling, and contemplative prayer. Our goal is to open new windows into the Bible in fresh and meaningful ways. Dr. Ward will share the challenges of bringing the Word alive for today's ears to hear. The workshop is specifically designed for preachers, "wanna be" preachers and all those who listen to preachers.

Free with your District Conference registration

Friday, November 9, 2012

10:00am – *Lunch Break* – 5:00pm

0.5 CEU for ordained ministers in area 4: Preaching & Worship

On-Line Registration Closes: Friday, October 19, 2012, last day to reserve meals & childcare.

- Late onsite registration at Hillcrest costs an additional \$25 per person, \$50 per family.
- Onsite registration has NO meal tickets, NO nursery / childcare, NO children or youth activity options.

New Life

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PSWD Youth grades 6 – 12

www.pswdcob.org/youth

Details on the web

District Conference is right around the corner
and we can't wait to see you there!

Highlights from the Youth Cabinet's plans:

- ◆ **Red Rope Lounge** - You ARE on the list!
- ◆ Matthew 25:35-40
Youth Led Bible Study
- ◆ Lunch and Fun at
Huntington Beach
- ◆ Dinner & Insight Session
with National Youth
Advisor, Becky Ullom
- ◆ All Worship and Meals Together
- ◆ Sr High Housing and Showers at Hillcrest



"Bound together in Love"

Schedule & more on pages [4](#) & [5](#) inside

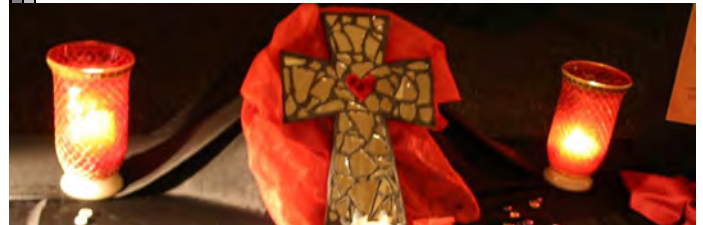
Last Year's District Conference Youth Event Photo by J.Jackson



District Conference

www.pswdcob.org/distconf

Details on the web



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Opens Monday, September 17

Business Book [On the web](#) & page [4](#)

Mailed to delegates in early October

Motel Reservations Page [7](#)

Beat the fairgrounds competition