Effective Church Staff Meetings

By Ron Aguilera

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I have both sat in meetings and led meetings for a long time. When I first started leading meetings, I quickly discovered the problem was not the meeting, but me, and the way the meeting was led. So, I adapted! When I became the senior pastor of a multi-church, I quickly realized the value and importance
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**Making the Risk Management Difference:**

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THE PASTORS' GENIUS STATION

By Dave Gemmell

Pastors attending the CALLED convention can take advantage of the Genius Station. Pastors should bring their laptops or smart devices and experts will help them get connected to the latest tools and resources for ministry.

Bible Study Factory - Receive your brand new customizable Open Source Digital Bible Studies for Pastors.
Adventist Learning Community
- Create your continuing education account and start getting CE credit.

**People Connect Software**
- Learn how to use the new NAD software for congregational care, membership tracking, and evangelistic follow-up.

**NAD Ministerial Department** - Get the convention app, CALLED digital magazine, Best Practices, and online congregation strategic planning tools.

**Limited registration** is still available for the CALLED convention, June 28-July 1.

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**Events, Resources, Announcements**

The Old Fashioned filmmakers are thrilled to announce their partnership with Pure Flix on the official release of *Old Fashioned* on DVD. Available in stores and online June 16. **Preorders** are available now.

**You Are a Pizza Box** - Jentezen Franklin uses an ordinary pizza box in this prop-enhanced sermon, to remind us that it is God in us that brings value to our lives.

**Previous Resource Links:**

- **Why Aren't Black Millennials Leaving the Church?**
- Adventist Youth Ontario
- Prophecies of Revelation Made Simple
- Nine Traits of Church Bullies
- Nine Ways to Deal With Church Bullies
- BRI Reflections
Ministry Partners

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I have both sat in meetings and led meetings for a long time. When I first started leading meetings, I quickly discovered the problem was not the meeting, but me, and the way the meeting was led. So, I adapted! When I became the senior pastor of a multi-church, I quickly realized the value and importance of productive staff meetings. Over the years, I found church staff persons, whether full-time, part-time, or volunteer, were among the most scarred by bad staff meetings, and I vowed to change this.

So, what have I learned? Here are the Five W's I try to apply:

**One: Who? Who should be included in regular staff meetings?**

I suggest you include all pastoral staff members. This includes all full-time Conference-paid pastors, part time church-paid pastors, and volunteer pastors. I think it is also important to include the church secretary/administrative assistant. You might consider ending the meeting in "Executive Session" (just the pastoral staff) in which you can address any sensitive and confidential issues.

As for other auxiliary staff, such as worship leader, treasurer, or custodian/grounds keeper, they can be invited to come to part of staff meeting, or you can meet with them as needed.

**Two: What? What kind of things should go on the agenda?**

First, have an agenda prepared ahead of time. This helps develop a culture of planning and thinking ahead. Each staff member should submit his/her items ahead of the meeting. This gives you an opportunity to have any pre-conversations needed, and to determine if the item is ready for the agenda. This also helps you plan the length of the meeting.

First: Begin the meeting with prayer. Prayer sets the tone for the meeting, and stresses this as a high value for your staff. You can pray for the church, its members, and the staff.

Second: Every meeting should include vision casting. Effective church staff meetings are rooted on the mission of the church. The leader must define reality, "Where we are," and then talk about where we are going, and how to get from "here" to "there." This is critical to movement.

Three: Reports from staff members. This is not only important information, but critical for the progress of the church,
and for accountability.

Four: Other issues like calendar, schedules, upcoming programs or events, etc.

Five: Once a month, I also love to spend some time on leadership training. Leaders must grow in order to maximize the gifts God has given them. I find doing leadership training stretches me and grows the staff.

Three: When? When should staff meeting be held? How long should staff meeting run?
Effective meetings can make a huge difference in the leadership and life of the church. Staff meetings should be regularly scheduled, weekly if possible. This helps a culture of caring, communication, and accountability to develop.

The meetings should have a fixed and predetermined length. Nothing discourages a staff member more than going longer than planned. Efficient staff members will already have plans after the meeting. Don’t impose upon that time. People tend to become restless if they don’t know when a meeting will end. The meetings should start on time and finish on time. I suggest you keep it about an hour to an hour and a half.

Four: Where?
Each church facility will dictate the best location. It might be the pastor’s office, or a committee room. I suggest that once a quarter, you meet off-site. This is an excellent time for some leadership development. I also like the once a year staff retreat.

Five: Why?
I find that regular meetings together help the staff to develop strong bonds as we move together to accomplish the mission God has given us. I also believe the staff meeting serves as an excellent mechanism for communication and accountability. It can also serves as encouragement as you are reminded that you are not alone in this endeavor.

I hope these suggestions will help you have a productive and enjoyable staff meeting, which honors God, and honors those who serve him.

_Ron Aguilera is executive secretary of administration for the Illinois Conference_
Church Transformation: A Pastor’s Journey

By Bob Hayes

The following article is my personal journey through the church transformation process. It is not my intent to imply that my journey should be yours, or become the new blueprint for churches. By sharing this, it is my hope that you will find inspiration to assist you in building God’s Kingdom wherever you find yourself serving the Master.

I was originally taught a cycle of evangelism that went like this: Step 1- Do pre-work (give Bible studies, door to door, smoking cessation programs and health fairs, send out handbills, etc.); Step 2- Hold evangelistic campaign; Step 3- Do follow-up work (visitation, seminars, Pastor’s Bible class, etc.).

All this worked well for a while, but we continued to see less church participation and poor attendance at meetings. Not to mention spending thousands of dollars for limited results! When I attended evangelism workshops on how to get better results, I always walked away hearing the same solution – “Work harder at pre-work and follow-up; pray more.” I did this; however, I continued to see the same poor results – with a lot of hard work and spending as much as $40,000 on an evangelistic campaign. I have come to label this model as the “STP” model for my churches. It seemed to always be the same ten people, doing all the work. I became so frustrated with this process that being in ministry began to lose all its joy and I wanted out.

During this time, the Florida conference began to send us to seminars on Church Transformation and encouraged us to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us and our congregation back to a discipleship model.

Following some of what I had learned, I prayerfully formed a “Dream Team.” When I met with my team, I asked them to prayerfully do an evaluation of how we were doing at carrying out the gospel commission. The first thing we did was to biblically define what a disciple of Jesus looks like. We then asked the question “How is our church doing at reaching people and providing the environment for the Holy Spirit to develop disciples of Jesus?” We were a busy church as far as activities and programs were concerned, but in our assessment, we were failing at producing disciples for Jesus - people who love God and live their lives wholly devoted to Him. As a result of this self-evaluation, we came up with a three phase plan:

Phase 1: Re-Education
Discipleship classes to help people understand the purpose of God’s church; what their individual role is; what gifts God has blessed them with; and how to use those gifts/passions in the community to advance God’s kingdom. After a participant finishes this discipleship class, we interview them in order to assist them in placement in either one of our church’s ministries, or a ministry within the community. The goal in doing this is because we know that service is a part of God’s plan for transforming our characters: “The only way to grow in grace is to be disinterestedly doing the very work which Christ has joined upon us - to engage, to the extent of our ability, in helping and blessing those who...
need the help we can give them.” Steps to Christ, 54-55

Phase 2/Becoming Community Based
Jesus was known in the communities he visited as One who was “filled with the “Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” Acts:10:38. We wanted to pattern ourselves after the life of Jesus. We based our community outreach on the ‘blueprint’ of Isaiah 58 where God commissions us “…to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free….to share your bread with the hungry…when you see the naked, you cover him…” He promises us "then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before thee, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard " Isaiah 58:8. So we began to pray about our community and how we could come in line with the blueprint of Isaiah 58. Once we stepped out into the community, God continued to open doors for us to minister.

Phase 3/Continuing Education
Based on Jesus’ model with His disciples where He sent them out and then continued to teach them, we continue to educate our members in order to strengthen each individual’s walk with God while sharpening their skills in soul winning.

So what is the fruit of all this? Well, we are becoming known in the community as a people who go about doing good. Each Sabbath we see more and more visitors from our community. We see growth in the lives of our members who are participating and becoming more like Jesus. The atmosphere within our church family is one of love and acceptance. Our retention of newly baptized members has gone from approximately 10% to 80%. Church attendance has gone from 150 to 300 on Sabbath mornings. With regard to stewardship, tithes and offerings just keep increasing.

Personally, I have never been more fulfilled in my ministry. Satan throws his arrows of course, but I am not afraid for my eyes are on Jesus. I praise God for all He is doing. May God guide all of you as you serve Him. If I can help you in any way, feel free to email me at bhayes1319@aol.com.

*Bob Hayes is the pastor of Palm Coast Church in Florida.*
Ministry Partners

Ministry Hacks: Body Outlines in the Parking Lot

By Steve Case

“What’s with the body outlines in the church parking lot,” people at the Cloverdale Adventist Church in Boise, Idaho wondered. When they got inside the church, they found more!

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A week later church leaders hosted a ReConnecting training weekend for about 25 church members who will now actively make contact with missing members. The congregation as a whole experienced this firsthand with a sermon on Luke 15 (lost sheep, lost coin, and lost sons). Several church members “left the church” during the sermon and later returned. How would the congregation respond? Those who returned shared their testimony at the end of the church service, with an eye for the congregation to be prepared to welcome back more missing members in the future.

Just as heaven rejoices when one person returns, the Cloverdale Church warmed up to being trigger-happy celebrants with balloons and singing and a balloon release in the church parking lot. Celebrations are meant to take place ASAP! Not surprisingly, the children did the best of any age group. We recommend they lead the way. Celebration and life beat death every time, especially in the spiritual realm.

Steve Case is president of Involve Youth
Making the Risk Management Difference

Equipping Your Safety Team
By Arthur F. Blinci and David Fournier

Accidents happen every week in Adventist Churches and Schools. From 2009 to 2013 the North American Division had 6,170 property, general liability and auto claims. The total cost of those claims for that period was $116,317,411. These claims represent a significant amount of funds, lost time, and interruption of ministry for the Church. This disrupts ministry, not just at the administrative level, but also at every level, particularly at the local church and school. As the local church administrator it is important for you to understand the effects that effective care and maintenance of your facilities as well as the proper management of church activities can have on your ministry.

Let’s take a look at these loss trends in just a bit more detail.

Property Losses
The North American Division in the last five years had 2,770 Property Claims and a total cost incurred of $57,741,224 for those claims.

See below the top five property losses experienced across the North American Division by cost and number of claims.

Of interest here is that while fire certainly costs the most, the greatest frequency of claims comes from crime followed closely by water damage. To a risk manager this means we need to pay more attention to security to address the crime losses. But crime losses, while frequent, do not create the same financial cost as the water damage. Water damage issues can be traced directly to lack of maintenance. While storms are often blamed for water damage issues, it is often the poor condition of the facility as it faces a storm that is the real problem.

To learn more about Protecting Your Church From Crime http://youtu.be/8CNI1Iwd244
To learn more about Water Damage http://youtu.be/bJlmnQ-thqU

General Liability & Auto Liability Losses
The North American Division in the last five years had 2,089 General Liability claims with a total cost of $33,923,942. During this same time period there were 1311 Auto Liability claims, which resulted in an additional cost of $24,652,245. Often times these claims can be prevented by having a strong safety program at your church or school.
General Liability and Auto Liability insurance is designed to protect your organization from the cost of accidents which may result in lawsuits due to negligence. Examples would include: people who are injured from a slip and fall accident, caused by a poorly maintained building, lack of proper supervision or training of participants during a church sponsored activity, texting or excessive speed when transporting people during a church outing. These types of accidents have resulted in serious injury and even death to our church members and students.

**What We Can Do**

First, we can help mitigate the cost of these claims by promptly reporting all accidents to your Conference and the insurance company within 48 hours or less. Let's look again at our North American loss statistics to see how long it takes to report a claim. The average lag-time between the accident's occurrence and the first report to Adventist Risk Management is 65 days! It is a proven axiom in the insurance industry the longer a claim remains unreported the higher the cost. We all can make a difference in this critical risk management area. When an accident occurs at your church you can immediately report the incident to our office at any time day or night. Adventist Risk Management maintains a 24-hour/7 day a week Claims reporting toll-free hotline at (888) 951-4276 to handle all types of accidents.

Some may wonder, why Adventist Risk Management would take a call during Sabbath hours? Remember the words of Jesus in Luke 14:5 – of recuing a person’s ox which had fallen into a ditch on Sabbath. Yes, our ministry includes responding to help your ministry in times of need.

**10 Best Practice Steps in Reporting an Accident**

1. Provide emergency medical first aid to any injured person.
2. Notify Emergency first-responders as may be needed for assistance.
3. Secure the area to prevent others from being injured.
4. Take appropriate actions to prevent the occurrence of any additional damage.
5. Take photos of the scene or damage and secure names and contact information from individuals who may have witnessed the accident.
6. **DO NOT ASSUME LIABILITY FOR THE ACCIDENT**
7. Report the Accident immediately to Adventist Risk Management (888) 951-4276 or your insurance carrier.
8. Notify your Conference administration of the accident and steps taken.
9. Complete any required claim reporting forms and return to your insurance company.
10. Cooperate with assigned claim adjustors or legal counsel.

Second, having an effective and proactive safety program at your church or school can be done with a few simple steps. Running an effective safety program doesn't have to be difficult and it doesn't have to take a great deal of time. Adventist Risk Management (ARM) has prepared the tools and the education to assist you.

Whether your church is large or small you can successfully operate a safety program that is neither time nor energy intensive. You and your designated Safety Officer don’t need a specialized degree to do this. The reward for your efforts is the knowledge that your work may save thousands of church dollars. These can be used for to further telling the story of Jesus in your community. Another benefit is that you have possibly saved people from injury, or even saved a life.

Direct your church safety officer to their home base at the Safety Officer Central page (http://www.adventistrisk.org/Prevention/Church.aspx) in the Prevention section of the ARM website. These pages will provide them with the
1. Evaluation & Risk Identification

All safety programs begin by identifying the risks and hazards that may cause accidents or injuries in your facilities. We accomplish this through careful evaluation of the physical condition of your facility. Evaluation includes looking at the interior, exterior of buildings as well as the surrounding property. ARM has created several simple tools to use in the evaluation process. The church self-inspection form is a very easy-to-use tool. The fillable digital form can be completed on your computer or tablet. You also have the option to print it and fill it out manually. Basically, the form guides you through the various parts of a church—from the mothers’ room to the sanctuary, the baptismal tank, etc. It will show you how to look for potential hazards or maintenance issues. Completing this form at least once a year will give you a good idea of what type of risks your church might be facing. It will also help you understand what kind of maintenance issues you should be addressing. This information will guide you and the board to understand the maintenance focus and how to prioritize these issues.

The length of the inspection will depend on the size and complexity of your church or school building. Our professional risk control specialists find that even after conducting a thorough inspection of a facility, the next year they will find problems they missed before, as well as new problems that have cropped up. This demonstrates the importance of regular inspections and maintenance.

The following links provide access to a 30-minute webinar about conducting self-inspections from one of our risk control specialists, as well as a short video.

- Link to webinar on self-inspections (http://youtu.be/MaCQxhoZX4A)
- Link to video on self-inspections (http://youtu.be/jMwsjM-DXNQ)

2. Emergency Planning

Emergency planning is incredibly important for your local church as well. An emergency can occur at any time. Would your congregation know how to respond if the fire alarm sounded during your sermon on Sabbath morning? Being prepared requires both planning and practice. Developing an Emergency Plan and having an annual practice drill can make the difference. You will find resources for building an emergency plan on the Safety Officer Central page of the Prevention section of our website. Several guides are posted on that page. Pay special attention to the Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship. The United States Department of Homeland Security has developed this guide. It walks you through all of the questions you should ask yourself as you’re creating your emergency plan. This is not something where one size fits all situations. The value of an emergency plan is in the customization of the plan for your local church or school.

Building your emergency plan may be one of the more time intensive parts of a safety program, but it is well worth the effort. Work with a team of people and develop the plan in a systematic way, rather than trying to muscle through it all by yourself over a weekend.

Don't forget that the last part of emergency planning may be the most important and that is to practice your plan.
3. Maintenance

Perhaps you were thinking that maintenance would not be a part of the Safety Officer job description, but it is a closely connected issue. One of the most frequent property claims received at Adventist Risk Management is related to water damage. The most common casualty claim is a slip and fall injury. Both of these typically stem from maintenance issues, such as torn carpeting or a leaky baptistry.

Many of the risks and hazards you will want to address will be maintenance issues. You will want to work closely with whoever is responsible for the care and upkeep of your church or school. Performing seasonal maintenance on different parts of your building such as gutters, walkways, and roofing materials will play a big part in understanding and preventing the property and casualty risks that your church maybe facing.

We have prepared seasonal based checklists to help you conduct your maintenance schedule in a methodical way. Visit the Maintenance page of Safety Officer Central to learn more and access the resources.

4. Stay Informed

The fourth step to running a successful safety program at your church is to continue to educate yourself. Adventist Risk Management provides Solutions, the weekly e-newsletter on safety topics relevant to the church. Please encourage your board members to subscribe to this free resource. Topics will be of interest to your safety officer as well as all of the other ministry leaders.

We also conduct webinars once a month on safety topics specifically designed for safety at the local church and school. Our team of risk management professionals is always working on new tools and materials.

Register for upcoming webinars or view previously recorded meetings at: http://www.adventistrisk.org/prevention-resources/webinars/safety-webinars

ARM encourages all pastors to Take advantage of these opportunities. Share the information with your deacons, church leadership, and ministry leaders. Appoint a church safety officer who can take a real leadership role in building a safety culture within your church. Empower them and support them as they provide a much-needed ministry to your church. Their work provides for the safety of the members and visitors. Your church can be a light in the community emphasizing the fact that you are people who care about the physical and spiritual well being of others.

Arthur F. Blinci is the Vice President and Chief Risk Management Officer for Adventist Risk Management Inc.

David Fournier is the Manager of Client Care for Adventist Risk Management, Inc.
Why Aren’t Black Millennials Leaving the Church?

By Bryan T. Calvin

August 21, 2013

If you keep up with Christian news and blogs at all you know there has been a lot of talk about why Millennials are leaving the church.

It is a hot topic for Christian books and speakers, and for good reason. People are trying to understand why Millennials are leaving, if we can get them back and if the problem is with the generation or with the message or presentation of the Church.

New data from the 2012 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life’s Religious Landscape Survey (that is a mouthful to say and write) shows while the number of people who don’t identify with a religion has risen to 20 percent of the U.S. population, for adults age 18-29, that number rises to over 30 percent. This trend has steadily been growing among Protestant mainline and evangelical populations.

The numbers for black millennials are, in fact, not dropping. That is, black adults age 18-29 are not leaving the Church.

And yet, this is a discussion that is missing a few pieces. If you look closer at these reports, you’ll see an interesting disparity.

The numbers for black Millennials are, in fact, not dropping. That is, black adults age 18-29 are not leaving the Church. The 2007 report shows that black Millennials makeup 24 percent of Historically Black Churches, the same percentage as their Boomer Generation parents. Religious affiliation for young black adults going to historically black churches remains stable. If you look at trends between the 2007 and 2012 surveys, there’s not much difference in the numbers for black Millennials.

In general, the numbers consistently show that blacks of all ages are more likely to maintain a religious affiliation than whites. So what’s different? Why aren’t black Millennials leaving the church as quickly as their white counterparts? There are a few theories that may help explain the difference, but let’s first look at some numbers to highlight more of this disparity.

The 2007 study asked questions about the frequency of prayer and church attendance, and the importance of religion and found some striking disparities. The survey showed that 79 percent of blacks say religion is very important to their lives compared to 56 percent of all Americans. In terms of how often people pray, 76 percent of blacks report to praying daily compared to 58 percent of all Americans. Church attendance differs, as well, with 39 percent of all Americans attending a service once a week compared to 53 percent of blacks.

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So, in general, it seems blacks are more invested in the practices and rituals associated with church life. Scores of religious and sociological scholars have found similar numbers in their academic research.

Maybe the difference is that whites and blacks view the institution of the Church differently. Historically, the black church has always played an important communal role. It was a gathering place where blacks could go and temporarily forget the hardships of systematic discrimination. Pre-Civil War, it served as one of the few places where a large number could meet without raising suspicions (although some southern states passed laws requiring black slave churches to have a white preacher or supervisor).

Post-slavery, when most protestant denominations wouldn’t allow black members or clergies, blacks built their own
and created their own specific denominations. The black church has also been a place of organizing for social justice, a key component in any historical fight for civil rights. There is a large and continuing tradition of black preachers also serving as local civil rights leaders. So from a historical perspective, maybe blacks and whites view the role of church differently.

My last theory is one frequently voiced time and again from black people of all age groups. Living in a predominately white (but racially changing) country, sometimes it is freeing to spend a few hours in a place where you are not a minority.

Historically, black people operating in white professional or social settings have had to create a distinct persona or presentation of themselves. In the black church, for those few hours on Sunday or Wednesday night, black people are free from such pretenses. NPR recently launched a site called Code Switch that explores this phenomenon across all races, and President Obama was even caught in the act in 2009 at a popular DC restaurant (beginning about 55 seconds in). Black churches provide a community where such “code shifts” are permitted without judgment.

You Might Also Like

This is also a call to the American Church as a whole to recognize the challenge and opportunity before them.

There is nothing inherently wrong with this. On the contrary, it's entirely understandable. But this is also a call to the American Church as a whole to recognize the challenge and opportunity before them. As the national conversation this year has illuminated, blacks continue to feel marginalized and mistrusted in this country. Black churches are uniquely positioned to be a haven of both communal and spiritual encouragement. Whether or not this is a mantle the American Church as a whole will be able to take on remains to be seen.

Do any or all of these explain why black Millennials haven’t left the Church at similar rates as whites? I honestly don’t know. And to be sure, we continue to see more and more mixed race congregations, and that is something to be celebrated. All I know is talking about Millennials leaving the Church without specifying which Millennials is only half of the conversation.

And if the American Church is willing to enter into conversation beyond the racial lines that have often been drawn up around it, they may realize that the solution to their “problem” of Millennials leaving is closer than they thought.
Nine Traits of Church Bullies

March 30, 2015

Church bullies are common in many churches. They wreak havoc and create dissension. They typically must have an “enemy” in the church, because they aren’t happy unless they are fighting a battle. They tend to maneuver to get an official leadership position in the church, such as chairman of the elders or deacons or treasurer. But they may have bully power without any official position.

Church bullies have always been around. But they seem to be doing their work more furiously today than in recent history. Perhaps this look at nine traits of church bullies can help us recognize them before they do too much damage.

1. They do not recognize themselves as bullies. To the contrary, they see themselves as necessary heroes sent to save the church from her own self.

2. They have personal and self-serving agendas. They have determined what “their” church should look like. Any person or ministry or program that is contrary to their perceived ideal church must be eliminated.

3. They seek to form power alliances with weak members in the church. They will pester and convince groups, committees, and persons to be their allies in their cause. Weaker church staff members and church members will succumb to their forceful personalities.

4. They tend to have intense and emotional personalities. These bullies use the intensity of their personalities to get their way.

5. They are famous for saying “people are saying.” They love to gather tidbits of information and shape it to their own agendas. See my previous post on this one item.

6. They find their greatest opportunities in low expectation churches. Many of the church members have an entitlement view of church membership. They seek to get their own needs and preferences fulfilled. They, therefore, won’t trouble themselves to confront and deal with church bullies. That leads to the next issue, which is a consequence of this point.

7. They are allowed to bully because church members will not stand up to them. I have spoken with pastors and church staff who have been attacked by church bullies. While the bully brings them great pain, they have even greater hurt because most of the church members stood silent and let it happen.

8. They create chaos and wreak havoc. A church bully always has his next mission. While he or she may take a brief break from one bullying mission to the next, they are not content unless they are exerting the full force of their manipulative behavior.

9. They often move to other churches after they have done their damage. Whether they are forced out or simply get bored, they will move to other churches with the same bullying mission. Some bullies have wreaked havoc in three or more churches.

Church bullying is epidemic in many of our congregations. They must be stopped. In my article on Wednesday, I deal with the topic of preventing church bullying. In the meantime, let me hear from you.
Nine Ways to Deal with Church Bullies

April 1, 2015

In my post on Monday, I dealt with the traits of church bullies. I now move from descriptive to prescriptive. How do we deal with church bullies? What can we do to prevent such bullying? Here are nine of my suggestions:

1. **Fight bullying with the power of prayer.** The most common targets of church bullies are the pastor and church staff. I encourage everyone in vocational ministry to ask humbly for people to pray for them daily. In two of the churches where I served as pastor, I had as many as 100 or more people committed to pray for me daily. They typically prayed for me for only two or three minutes each day at noon. Their intercessory prayers for me were brief, but they were powerful!

2. **Seek to have an Acts 6 group in the church.** I am specifically referring to the manner in which the Jerusalem church dealt with murmuring and complaining. They appointed a group to take care of the widows who were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. The seven who were appointed to the task were thus not only to do that ministry, but they were also to preserve the unity of the church. Churches need either informal or formal groups that see their ministry as dealing with conflict, complaints, and dissension so that unity is preserved.

3. **Have a high expectation church.** I have addressed the issues of high expectation churches and low expectation churches many times on this blog. Higher expectation churches tend to be more unified, more Great Commission focused, more biblically defined, and more servant oriented. Stated simply, high expectation churches don’t offer an environment conducive to bullying.

4. **Encourage members to speak and stand up to church bullies.** Bullying thrives in a church where the majority remains in silent fear of church bullies. Bullies tend to back down when confronted by strong people in the church. We just need more strong people in the church.

5. **Make certain the polity of the church does not become a useful instrument to church bullies.** Many churches have ambiguous structures and lines of accountability. Polity is weak and ill-defined. Bullies take advantage of the ambiguity and interpret things according to their nefarious needs.

6. **Be willing to exercise church discipline.** Church discipline is a forgotten essential of many churches. Bullies need to know there are consequences for their actions, and church discipline may be one of them.

7. **Have a healthy process to put the best-qualified persons in positions of leadership in the church.** Bullies often are able to push around less qualified people who have found themselves in positions of leadership. There should be a spiritually and strategically designed process to choose and recruit people for key leadership positions.

8. **Have a healthy process to hire church staff.** For example, an egregious mistake would be the church’s hiring of a senior staff member without the enthusiastic support of the pastor. If the pastor and new staff member do not have good chemistry, a church bully can quickly pit one against the other. A unified church staff is a major roadblock for a church bully.

9. **Encourage a celebratory environment in the church.** Joyous churches deter bullies. They like somber and divided churches.

Church bullying is more widespread than we often like to admit. I hope these nine suggestions can help keep the bullies out of your church. Let me hear from you.