

Pastor's Reflections

By Dr. Jeffrey E. Frantz

As we continue to grow our church, through new programs and new ideas, consider the following approach to drawing new people to our church:

The KEY: invitational evangelism.

Although the idea of *invitational evangelism* is not new, it remains the best way for most churches to grow their congregations.

First, a word on *evangelism*. It is amazing how this word continues to be a stumbling block for many churches. Instantly, images of reluctant people knocking on doors or handing out leaflets at the mall come to mind.

Evangelism is simply a sharing of our commitment and excitement about the gospel, about what God has done for us in Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Our excitement may be in the form of deeds of charity and support for the needy and the downtrodden. It may be in our enthusiasm for a new spiritual growth program at church, like *centering prayers* or the new *healing and renewal* service we offer bi-monthly.

What God has done for us in Jesus is call us to life, to be alive to the best that is in us, to a largeness of spirit—to a sensitivity and caring for those on the margins of life, to be compassionate and merciful to the bereaved, the depressed, and those working their way through whatever tough times.

We *invite* people to church because we want them to experience this same sense of *life* and *largeness of spirit* in their lives.

For the ministry of our church, there are three areas of *invitation* I want to emphasize:

1. Invite people to check out our website. When Conference Minister, Rev. Kent Siladi, preached at our church (last fall, I believe), he mentioned, later, that our church had one of the best websites in the Florida Conference.

Our website, again, is: www.mlcchurch.com. It is maintained and updated regularly by Yvette Frantz. By the way, she is always looking for pictures to put on our website in promoting our programs. Call the office or Yvette directly to find out how to get any pictures you might have to her.

2. General invitations to worship. In the weekly routine of our lives, we all meet people, some of whom would be receptive to an invitation to attend our church. We simply need to invite them.

We never know when any person might be open to a deepening relationship with God and to a period of spiritual growth in their faith journey. We simply need to be more intentional (more aware) of this possibility in people.

3. Invitations to special events. This can be special happenings at the church, like Pilgrim Village, for example (in November), or special *mission outreach* projects sponsored by our church, like CROP Walk (in February).

The overarching key is that—together—we seek to be more mindful of opportunities—every day—to invite people to our church or to a church function.

With regard to all of this, I want to challenge our church—starting with me—to set a goal, for the months of August and September ... a goal of 40 persons who attend our church as a result of the invitations of our members and friends. That amounts to about five persons per Sunday morning. We usually get 1 to 4 walk-ins anyway; but this would be in addition to the walk-ins.

Already, we have a relatively good retention rate of those first-time visitors who attend our church on Sunday mornings. The retention and assimilation of new persons/members is not difficult. Again, this we do quite well (there is room for improvement, to be sure). The KEY is getting new faces into our sanctuary to begin with.

So rev up your evangelism motors, friends, and let's start—today—thinking about who we can invite to our church (for worship or for a program ... the bottom line is that we want them to start attending our Sunday morning worship).