



Rev. Norwood N. "Woody" Hingle III, Ph. D; Sunday School: 9:15 AM; Sunday Worship: 10:30 AM

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A Word from Woody...

Seeking a Healthy Church

In all the comments I hear and read from pastors and church leaders about growing a church, there is one question that never seems to be asked. In fact, the answer to that question just seems to be assumed. Nevertheless, I have found this question to be essential to every local church that is intent on being what God wants us to be. The question is: what is a healthy church?

Throughout my nearly 25 years of being a pastor I have repeatedly heard from speakers at church conferences who had grown their churches in 10 years from 50 to 5,000, or thereabouts. Inquiring minds want to know—how did the pastors do this? What is their **secret to ministry that I don't know? I have read books by such pastors and have learned much from them. But I have also found a lack of serious consideration of that question above in their works. And then one day it hit me why.**

I was at a conservative church seminar where a clergy couple enthusiastically shared about their creative approach to ministry. Their new church plant was drawing many millennials from a secular area of a large city. The fruit of their ministry seemed obvious from their growing numbers in worship attendance. Finally, it was time for the question/answer period, so I raised my hand and asked the question that seemed like the elephant in the room that everyone was avoiding. I basically said, **"It is interesting that you are in ministry to a secular area of the city and are drawing many people to your church. Please tell me how do you handle hot-button issues where the Bible gives us guidance, such as abortion and homosexuality?"** After a moment of silence where the clergy wife stared at the clergy husband, she said somewhat awkwardly to him, **"You take this question!"** The clergy



husband turned to me and said basically they did not address such issues because this would split the church. As I have pondered his response over the years, and as I have pondered the struggle we had last year in joining the Wesleyan Covenant Association, I cannot escape the following observation. If in order to build a church the clergy must avoid biblical issues that are unpopular in the secular culture, then what that church is offering—indeed, if it even is a church—is a shallow, inadequate understanding of Christian discipleship.

Nearly 20 years ago a pastor named Mark Dever noticed this inadequacy in churches, and this led him to write the book *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*. It was reprinted in 2013 in its third edition. He refers to the third commandment **against taking God's name in vain**

(Exodus 20:7) and makes the following astute observation that every church ignores to its peril. **"By this he [God] does not mean just avoiding profanity. More than that, he is saying, 'Don't take my name upon yourself, don't claim to be my follower, if you're not going to live like one of mine.' That, no less than profanity, would be taking God's name in vain. That command is for us as a church as well. Many churches today mistake selfish gain for spiritual gain. We mistake mere excitement for true worship. We treasure acceptance rather than living in a way that will incur worldly opposition (see 2 Tim. 3:12 [Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.]). Regardless of their statistical profiles, too many churches today seem unconcerned about the very biblical marks that should distinguish a vital, growing church"** (pp. 259-260).

I invite you to join me at our **New Year's Retreat** on January 26-27 (please see the related article inside) where we will explore **Scripture and Dever's book** as we seek to grow in being a healthy church.

Yours in Christ's love,

Woody

Youth Corner

Bake Sale for Compassion!

We had a great time at the Goudeau's home for our Christmas Breakfast Party and White Elephant gift exchange! Many thanks to the Goudeaus for opening their beautiful home to us and treating us to a delicious breakfast! This month we will hold a bake sale (on a Sunday to be announced) to help support our child with Compassion International, 13-year-old Tugirmana Ernest from Rwanda. Get ready for some wonderful sweet treats for a significant cause!



Church Family Night



Randy led us in Christmas caroling at last month's Family Night.

On Wednesday, January 10th (please note change from usual first Wednesday) we'll enjoy our Church Family Night. From 6:00-7:00 PM, we will eat Popeye's red beans and rice! We would appreciate attenders bringing a side dishes, salad, or dessert. Suggested donation is \$5 per person, no more than \$15 per family.

For our program from 7:00-7:30 PM, we will meet the Mennonite Disaster Service group that has come from Pennsylvania to work on churches in New Orleans.

Meetings This Month

Monday, January 22 combined Finance Committee and Church Council, 6:45 PM; to approve the budget for 2018. This meeting is for our newly elected leaders for 2018 and includes those elected to Finance and Church Council as well as all other committee chairs. See the bulletin board for a list of 2018 Church Officers.

Scenes from the Christmas Season



Come Sing in the Choir

Choir practice continues to meet at 9:00 AM on Sunday mornings with our Music Director Leonardo Santos and Worship Leader Randy Roberts. For more information please contact the Church Office.

New Year's Retreat Soon

We will have our annual retreat to start off the New Year on the right foot on Friday-Saturday, January 26th-27th. **The theme off this retreat is, "Seeking Growth as a Healthy Church", and the talks will be based on Scripture and Mark Dever's book *Nine Marks of the Healthy Church*.** The speakers will be Pastor Woody and other leaders in the church who will summarize and apply **some key chapters from Dever's book. We will meet for supper on Friday at 6:00 PM at Country Inn & Suites in Covington, LA, and our first talk will be at 7:00 PM.** The retreat will end on Saturday at 12:00 noon. The cost is \$115 per person for the retreat, hotel room with two queen beds, supper, and breakfast; cost for two people to a room is **\$130 (\$65 per person).** Dever's book is available at the church for \$15.

New Year's Sermon Series

Pastor Hingle will preach a new series for the New Year entitled, "Four Themes in Proverbs in the New Year". This series will extend to Sunday, February 4th, with a pause in the series for Sunday, January 28th so Pastor Hingle can give his annual "State of the Union" message.

Prayer Focus

- ✝ Barbara Velasquez, health
- ✝ The UMC, unity, faithfulness to the God of the Bible
- ✝ Praise God for 2018 pledges of \$111,744!!!
- ✝ Matthew Cull, recovery from accident
- ✝ Allen Henson, recovery from surgery
- ✝ Keith Randazzo, health

Thank You from The Hingles!

Dear Lake Vista UM Church Family:

Thank you very much for the end-of-year gift. Your generosity and kindness have overwhelmed us! We truly appreciate not only this gift—which is a great blessing to us in many ways-- but also your thoughtfulness and love that are behind it. It is an honor for Woody to be your pastor and for our family to serve Christ beside you. We wish you and your loved ones a blessed 2018!

In Christ's Love,

The Hingles



Happy Birthday, Jesus!

Read your newsletter online at <http://www.LakeVistaUMC.org>

S.P.A. Ladies To Host Phylliss Schirer Simulcast

Lake Vista's S.P.A. Ladies invite you to join them and women from around the world on April 28 for this inspiring one-day event with Priscilla Shirer!

This global, one-day simulcast that focuses on the power of prayer and learning to study God's Word for yourself will be brought to you in our Fellowship Hall!

Watch for more details in the coming months, and be in prayer about inviting your friends.

Addressing the Skeptics

We will continue discussing Sam Harris' *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values*, which is a *New York Times* Bestseller.

Harris is a neuroscientist and author of other *New York Times* Bestsellers *The End of Faith* and *Letter to a Christian Nation*. Harris is considered one of the leading New Atheists along with Richard Dawkins.

We will meet on Friday, January 19th and continue **our discussion of Harris' book**, ch. 2, pp. 85-112. You are invited to join us, regardless of whether you have read the chapter, and bring your lunch (the church will provide the drinks).

Prayer Walk Around the Neighborhood

This month's prayer walk will be Saturday, January 13th from 10:30-11:30 AM. Please join us for this wonderful ministry!

Small Group Offerings

Newcomers are welcome at all the gatherings below!

Wednesday SONrise Continues! A mid-week time of worship from 6:30-7:30 AM in the Chapel, with fellowship afterwards in the Parlor. Worship includes a time of congregational prayer for individuals, our church, and The UMC, as well as a devotional and communion. What a wonderful way to be refreshed in the middle of the week!

The Wonderful Wednesday book and Bible study is studying *A Firm Foundation*. The book will help pastors and ministry leaders cast a vision for their church and congregation on what it means to remain faithful disciples in the theological tradition of historic Methodism rather than bend to the whims of the culture. Open to all..

The S(tudy), P(ray), A(ct) Ladies meets Tuesdays beginning January 9, from 9:00-10:00 AM, alternating between **Cheryl Richard's house at 27 Warbler St., and Debby Grimm's house next door at 31 Warbler St.** to study **Lysa Terkeurst's *Finding I AM: How Jesus Fully Satisfies the Cry of Your Heart***. The video and homework sessions are interspersed with several mission opportunities. Workbook \$17.00. Syllabus available from Debby or church office.

Sunday School classes for all ages begin at 9:30 AM on Sunday mornings. The adult class meets in the Parlor. Youth and children meet in the Education Building.

Please call Susan in the office (504-288-2242) if you have any questions about any of the above activities.

A lighthouse for Christ in the heart of the lakefront.

Lake Vista

United Methodist Church

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