



## *The Newsletter*



### **SAINT AUGUSTINE'S CHURCH**

**The Mission of the Church** is to restore all people to unity with God and with each other in Jesus Christ. We pursue that mission in prayer, worship, and the sacraments, the proclamation of the Gospel, and in working for justice, peace and love.

The Book of Common Prayer, Page 855

**Saint Augustine's Church** is a parish of the Diocese of Fond du Lac: A community of disciples enthusiastically leading all people to transformation in Jesus.

## **WHY MANY WELCOMING CHURCHES ARE DYING CHURCHES**



Comment: This article as well as one posted on FB this summer explores factors of church growth.

I was listening to a sports radio show on my way to church one morning. The two DJs were doing their usual bit of asking each other trivia questions. One of the DJs asked, "What are the top nine favorite religious Christmas Carols in the United States?" The other DJ had a hard time answering. He got only one: "O Holy Night." Upon learning that another popular carol is "Silent Night" he asked, "Wait, that's a religious one? How?" He was familiar with the tune of "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" but again, he didn't know it was religious.

That same day, for our church preschool's Christmas party, I was helping one of the teachers and her teenage daughter set up some decorations in the sanctuary while the musicians were practicing some Christmas carols. Unknowingly I was humming along and the daughter asked, "Oh, what song is that?" After realizing that I was humming aloud, I had to take a moment to think about what song I was humming along to.

"Oh. It's 'It Came Upon a Midnight Clear.'"

"I never heard of that song."

What is it about this song that no one knows about?

Out of curiosity, I started asking her if she knew other "well-known" Christmas carols. Nope. I don't think so. Sounds familiar. I think so...? Manger? What's a manger? Those were the answers to my spur-of-the-moment pop quiz.

It's no secret that our culture is becoming increasingly "secular." What's frustrating is that a lot of our churches still operate with the assumption that everyone knows about the church. And when we meet people that don't know the Lord's Prayer, instead of trying to teach them, we become more outraged at the secularity of our culture.

Where I believe my church and others fall short is meeting people where they are and joining in on the conversations they are already having. We still seem to want people to meet us where *we*

are. At a recent visioning meeting, we talked about how we can reach our community and let them know that our church exists. A majority of the ideas were something along the lines of a facelift for our campus so that we can look fresh, brighter, newer for the people driving by.

“If they see a new landscape, they might think there’s life in the church and may want to come and check us out.”

That’s all good, but a new landscape or change of color of the church building isn’t going to draw people in.

That’s the second mistake many of us make. Not only do we assume that a majority of our neighbors know about church, we also look at outreach through the lens of the question “How do we get people into our pews” rather than actually being missional.

My church is absolutely welcoming. Many other churches are also welcoming... and happy, gracious and grateful to meet new families. *But a welcoming church can easily become a dying church.* Welcoming suggests passively waiting for people to come to be embraced, much like a dog anticipating and waiting for its master to come home.

Yes, we need to be welcoming... but more importantly, we need to be invitational. That means taking a risk and putting ourselves out there for possible rejection when we invite people to our church. It means going out into the world, making contact with people and building relationships with them.

Many decades ago, people looked for the cross and flame (the United Methodist Church logo) when they moved into a new town.

We don’t have that luxury anymore.

We can’t just wait and assume people are going to show up — because they won’t. We’re also going to encounter more and more folks who don’t know the things about our faith that we take for granted. And that’s okay.

What’s not okay is for us to mistake the words of Jesus to “Go” for “Stay and wait for people to come” — no matter how welcoming we may be.



**Joseph Yoo** is pastor of St. Mark United Methodist Church in Santa Barbara, California. He is the author of [Practical Prayer](#) and [Encountering Grace](#). He blogs at [JosephYoo.com](#).

## Planning Ahead...

Wednesday, January 27<sup>th</sup> Men’s Breakfast 9 a.m. Riverview Women’s Breakfast 9:15 Rhldr. Cafe  
February 7<sup>th</sup>....Bring your toy (real or picture) and place in toy box in the Guild Hall.  
February 9<sup>th</sup>....5 p.m. Mardi Gras celebration in the Guild Hall. Sign up and bring a friend.  
February 10<sup>th</sup>....5:30 p.m. Ash Wednesday mass.



## **Church for the Unaffiliated**

*By James K. Wellman, Jr.*



## **Leaving Church, and Coming Back**

*By Matt and Jessica Kelley*

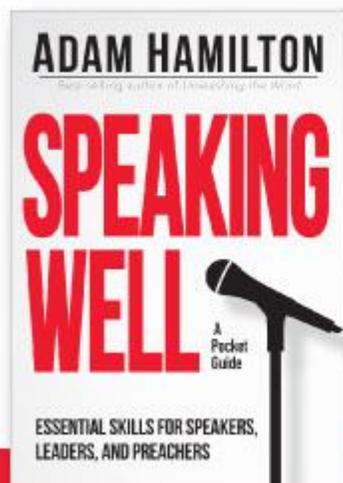


## Incentives to Decline: Why Some Churches Really Don't Want to Grow

*By John Flowers, Karen Vannoy*

### Featured Resources

## NEW FROM ADAM HAMILTON



"One of today's masters instructs us in the art of public speaking."

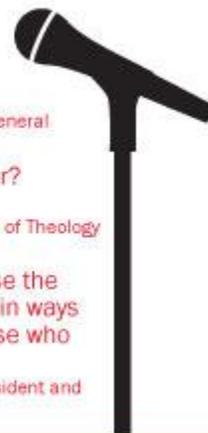
—**Cal Turner**, retired CEO of Dollar General

"Want to be a better speaker? Read this book!"

—**O. Wesley Allen Jr.**, Perkins School of Theology

"Adam teaches us how to use the gift of words effectively and in ways that elevate and inspire those who hear them."

—**Irvine O. Hockaday Jr.**, retired President and CEO of Hallmark Cards



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## Trending



## Blessed are the pure in doctrine?

*By Zack Hunt*



## Jesus may not care if you own a gun ...

*By Chad Holtz*

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