



Session II - Conserving

Community and Belonging

"We may not have it all together, but together we have it all."

Author unknown

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.

Ephesians 2:19

Small, strong churches are:

- open and inclusive
- warm and welcoming

Their healthy network of relationships offers a sense of roots, place and belonging with one another.

Small, strong churches are:

- a family, not an institution
- people centered, not organization-centered

and they include in the family persons served in mission.

In the first century, the vows involved in becoming a part of the family of God were something like this:

- Will you love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and soul and mind and strength?
- Will you love your neighbor as generously as you love yourself?
- Will you be a part of this family of grace, compassion, community, and hope?

In our time, people join a family, not an organization – a congregation, not a denomination – a movement, not an institution. People are not looking for programs and activities that take them out of life and put them inside a church building; they're looking for a family that will help them live life richly and freely, in the day-to-day world God gives us.

"We may not have it all together, but together we have it all."

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Self-reliance and Self-sufficiency

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters, compared to what lies within us."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Small, strong churches:

- have a consistent spirit of self-reliance
- encourage creativity and improvisation
- benefit from community resources
- have just enough of a pastor to be helpful

Truths in all small churches:

- a shortage of personnel and money
- inadequate supplies
- hardly enough of anything

The difference in whether they are strong, weak or dying is what they do with the resources God has given them.

In small, strong churches the spirit is:

"We do not put our future in the hands of someone else; we do for ourselves."

Self-reliant leaders create self-reliant congregations. Self-sufficient pastors create self-sufficient congregations.

- **Under threat, people wither.
With encouragement, people grow.**
- **People are not persuaded to do something because someone tries to frighten them.**
- **Small, strong churches are tough and resilient and last a long, long time.**

Take time to claim your strengths; they are gifts of God.

Take time to have fun; it's God's way of teaching you your strengths.

Take time to grow yourself; only you can grow you.

Take time to live well; this is the life God gives you.

**Take time to trust yourself; God trusts you.
Take time to be self-reliant; it's better than being dependent.
Take time to share with others; they will bless you, and you will bless them.
Take time to have hope; you are a child of God.**

The more consistently self-reliant a congregation is, the more creative it is. The more self-sufficient a congregation is, the more improvisational it is.

Small, strong churches have discovered how to make do. They focus on creativity and improvisation, not on complaining and whining.

Small, strong churches live in the community, not inside their buildings. Community people help the congregation precisely because the congregation is sharing its gifts and competencies, compassion and strengths by helping people in the community.

Small, strong churches don't want their pastors to do too much for them – they don't want to become dependent.

**"What lies behind us and what lies before us
are tiny matters, compared to what lies
within us."**

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Worship and Hope

**"Everything done in humankind is done on
the basis of hope."**

Martin Luther

**In small, strong churches worship is the
gathering of the family. It is:**

- **Warm and welcoming**
- **Stirring and inspiring**
- **Congregational and sacramental**
- **Helpful and hopeful**

The preaching package . . .

The music component . . .

The Christmas, Easter, and 5-8 more focus

Participation not observation

Small, strong churches do well what they do well and simply.

They see no excuse for dull, boring worship services.

The worship format in small, strong churches is: a strong start and a strong end sandwiching hope and warmth.

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Ralph Waldo Emerson

Questions?

Breakout Session