

144th Session Oklahoma State Annual Conference
Bishop Michael L. Mitchell, Presiding

State of the Church

August 22, 2020

To: Constituency of the 144th Session of the Oklahoma State Annual Conference

The Committee on the State of the Church finds the following:

1. The challenges of leading the people of God are formidable and still the opportunities for community transformation and personal flourishing are surprisingly bright. The Covid-19 Pandemic has precipitated a cultural, spiritual, and technological disruption around the world. The church at large, is challenged to re-imagine the use of digital tools for fresh and new delivery platforms as affordability looms manageable. Partnerships with other institutions, organizations and leaders are now key in unlocking and maximizing effective performance of programs and ministry initiatives. The percentage of Americans who identify with mainline Protestant churches continues to decrease as the needs of millennials are not purposefully engaged. Trends are consistent across ethnic and cultural lines while children and family members of anchor members no longer attend the church of their birth; and the roles of religiously unaffiliated congregations continue to rise. According to a new Pew Research Center survey, Black and Hispanic adults in the United States have been hit hard by the coronavirus outbreak and are more likely than white Americans to be concerned about contracting the virus and unknowingly spreading it to others. These racial and ethnic discrepancies extend to the perceived safety of attending religious services during the outbreak, as four in ten Black or Hispanic worshippers say their own houses of worship should be closed for in-person worship services.
2. It is profoundly clear that the participation and input of millennials is vital to the future of the church as local congregations consider establishing and building efficacious ministries to development faith-filled disciples.
3. The economic impact of Covid-19 has been devastating to our national economy. The trickle-down effect has not negatively touched all local churches. However, many have not been exempted from the sting of revenue losses which are sure to become more profound as time continues to reveal the lasting effects of the pandemic.
4. There remains a dearth in attendance across the Conference with more churches having 10 or fewer members attending on Sunday morning or in active status.
5. Our over 60 demographics still represents the strength of our churches as we continue to see high school graduates, college graduates and new arrivals to our cities move in different directions. Young adults who have been trained and nurtured in our YPD are not transitioning to the next level of ministry.

The Committee on the State of the Church therefore recommends the following actions be taken to offset current trends and the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic, while promoting church growth, evangelism and Christian discipleship.

1. We must be purposeful in drafting millennials to engage in not only the delivery phase of ministry opportunities, but also the development phase.

2. We encourage the use of digital platforms such as YouTube because YouTube is one of the best ways to reach people. While Facebook is still the king of social media, YouTube focuses solely on videos, which people love. Consider, YouTube has over two billion users, Millennials are the biggest audience, over a billion hours of video is watched daily and over 70% of views come from mobile devices.
3. If you want to reach millennials, your church should consider YouTube. Creating videos that are 5-10 minutes long isn't overly difficult. Special musical numbers, funny Christian skits and interviews with Christian leaders are just a few ideas to help your church be a part of those daily billion views.
4. We encourage our leadership across the state to continue to be more purposeful and intent toward working together on creating opportunities for Christian education, church growth and evangelism.
5. Every local church should designate "Evangelism Sunday" to create impetus for members to invite visitors for worship.

Humbly Submitted,

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