



The 20th vs 21st Century Church

Observations by Marion Aldridge, Coordinator

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of South Carolina

Copyright: June 5, 2006

| ISSUE | Church in 20th century | Church in 21st century |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Activities | Age-graded | Intergenerational; don't separate families |
| 2. America | Mission senders | Mission field |
| 3. Appearances | Church is a place to see and be seen. | "Don't waste my time." |
| 4. Attendance at church | Every time the doors are open | When it is convenient |
| 5. Automobiles driven to church | Four family members in one car | Four family members in three cars |
| 6. Bible translation | King James Version | Whatever. After all, they don't speak King James English in Japan. Duh... |
| 7. Bottom line | Church, Bible, Denomination or "Christianity" | Jesus |
| 8. Brand loyalty | Yes | "What have you done for me lately?" |
| 9. Cause and effect | Deuteronomy: Effect logically follows cause | Job: Stuff happens. |
| 10. Centralization | Yes | No |
| 11. Change | Resists | Resists, though it is expected and necessary |
| 12. Children | "To be seen and not heard" | "To be seen, heard and obeyed!" |
| 13. Christian growth from... | One church, one denomination | Multiple churches and sources including para-church and Internet |
| 14. Church as business (budgets, buildings and office hours) | Very important | Relationships in Christian community are most important. |
| 15. Coffee | Maxwell House in a 40-cup urn, small styrofoam cups and powdered creamer (YUK!) | Starbucks Café Latte, Frappacino, Grande Mocha, etc. (YUM!) |

| ISSUE | Church in 20th Century | Church in 21st Century |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16. Comfort level | Same ol' same ol', predictable, comfortable, hymns | Edgy, unpredictable, uncomfortable, drama |
| 17. Communication | Printed materials and group announcements | Internet, email, text messaging, FaceBook, blogs, I-pod, MP3 |
| 18. Congregational governance | Committees, votes, lengthy processes | "Just do it." |
| 19. Congregational life | At the church building | In the community |
| 20. Conversation | Let's don't talk about hard things. | Let's talk about everything. |
| 21. Conversion motivation | Heaven and hell | Life issues: marriage, depression, children, bettering self and community |
| 22. Converted from what? | Cheating on tests, disobeying parents | Alcoholic? Skeptic? Stripper? Drug abuser? |
| 23. Costs | Keep it cheap because the church pays | User fees for curriculum, camps, coffee |
| 24. Cultural trust of church | Church trusted | Church not trusted |
| 25. Decision making | Roberts Rules of Order (winners and losers) | Consensus (attempt to find common ground) |
| 26. Denomination | Loyal and lifelong | Don't care |
| 27. Discipleship model | Classroom learning | One-on-one, mentoring, coaching |
| 28. Division in churches | Along denominational lines | Along secular political lines |
| 29. Doctrine | Apostles creed/ Indoctrination/ Catechism/ Dogma | Mix and match/Learn and discover/Can be very naïve/no historical support required |
| 30. Dress | Dress up in Sunday best | Casual |
| 31. During worship | Hymn books, bulletins | PowerPoint projector, big screen for worship |

| ISSUE | Church in 20th Century | Church in 21st Century |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 32. Ethnicity | Always one ethnicity/culture | Multi-ethnic/multi-cultural okay |
| 33. Evangelism | Assent to information and join the church | Relational: "I like who you are." |
| 34. Expectations | "Everybody" knows that... | "They didn't get the memo..." |
| 35. Flexibility | Systems and structures highly valued | Spontaneity highly valued |
| 36. Generosity | Yes, consistent, tithe | Yes, but inconsistent, give to pet projects |
| 37. Giftedness | Certain gifts most valued: preaching, teaching, music | All gifts valued: gardening, cooking, coaching, singing, building houses, painting, writing |
| 38. Governance | Roberts Rules of Order | Consensus |
| 39. Group size | Bigger is always better | Size does not matter, as long as there is intimacy |
| 40. Guilt | Often, and sometimes manufactured | Occasionally, but over different issues; resists hanging onto guilt |
| 41. Health | Build a hospital | Provide mental health counseling |
| 42. Heaven | "I'm sure I am going to heaven." | "I'm sure we are all going to heaven." |
| 43. Hellfire and Damnation | "Now that's good preaching." | "Daddy, why is the preacher angry?" |
| 44. Homosexuality | Hidden, otherwise, mostly hostile, unless you were gay, then guilt, depression, anger, confusion | More open: Ranges from "In your face" (of gays) to "live and let live" to hostile |
| 45. Hospital and bereavement visits | Only a visit from the pastor "counts." | Members minister to members. |
| 46. How work gets done | Committees elected by congregation | Self-appointed teams based on giftedness |
| 47. Information flow | Top down | Up, down, sideways, diagonal, across the room, across the Internet |

| ISSUE | Church in 20th Century | Church in 21st Century |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 48. Information sharing | 9 out of 10 “Church visitors” give name, phone number and address expecting follow-up visit. | 1 out of 10 “Church visitors” give name, phone number and address for follow-up visit. |
| 49. Innovations | Hang on to the old | Drop what isn’t working; willing to try new things |
| 50. Jesus | “Search for the historical Jesus” | “Search for the life-transforming Jesus” |
| 51. Labels | Conservative, liberal, fundamentalist, moderate, evangelical, Baptist, Unitarian, Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Charismatic | “Believers”/“Christians” |
| 52. Language | Pious (blood of the Lamb, saved, redeemed) | Therapeutic (addiction, codependent) |
| 53. Leadership | CEO | Player/Coach/Coordination |
| 54. Literature | Quarterlies “approved” by denomination | Anywhere, everywhere, even secular movies |
| 55. Litigation | Rare | Common, even in church |
| 56. Meetings | Sunday focused | Random; whatever fits my schedule |
| 57. Membership | Join: “Membership has its privileges.” | Participate without joining (Bible says to make disciples not to make members.) |
| 58. Missions | Pray, send others and give money to support | Go (get on a bus), pray and give |
| 59. Model for Discipleship | Christian Education | Spiritual Formation |
| 60. Money | Earn it, save it. | It will be there when I need it. |
| 61. Motivation | Guilt, parents, cultural expectations, duty | Internal, good feelings, meaningful service, fun |
| 62. Movies | White Christmas/Sound of Music/Star Wars | Lord of the Rings/Harry Potter/Monster’s Ball |

| ISSUE | Church in 20th Century | Church in 21st Century |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 63. Musical Instruments in Worship | Organ/piano | Drums/synthesizer/or don't care |
| 64. Mystery | Prefers clear answers | Comfortable with paradox and ambiguity |
| 65. Name Recognition | Billy Graham | Rick Warren/Joel Osteen |
| 66. Non-Christian religions | Considered "ungodly" | Even if there is disagreement, there is respect. |
| 67. Numbers | Nickels, noses, budgets, tithers | Don't care; whose life has been changed? Experiential |
| 68. Opinions about "Oughts" and "Shoulds" | Many, especially about childhood faith habits and memories | Some opinions, and more will come, but not too many yet |
| 69. Options | Either/Or | Both/And |
| 70. Organizations | Clubs, associations, denominations, national and international | Do your own thing. Local. |
| 71. Other faith groups | Denominationally loyal | Ecumenical and interfaith |
| 72. Pages | Already full of words, telling us what to think and feel | Empty, allowing us to journal our own thoughts and feelings |
| 73. Parenting | Parent is the authority | Parents try to be "best friends" |
| 74. Pastor | Superhuman--All things to all people; all the answers; preaches 50 times per year (at least) | Human, equipper; allowed to be wrong and make mistakes. Allows laity to lead worship. |
| 75. Permission | Earned | It is easier to get forgiveness than permission. |
| 76. Perspective | Long term | Short term |
| 77. Place/Location/Buildings/Facility | Proud of "our" building, sanctuary | Doesn't matter: movie theater or shopping center |
| 78. Power and Control | White European males in positions of authority | Up for grabs; will follow "authentic" leadership |

| ISSUE | Church in 20th Century | Church in 21st Century |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 79. Preacher(s), Teacher(s) | One primary communicator | Multiple (even though one may be the charismatic leader) |
| 80. Priority on... | Programs | Relationships/People |
| 81. Relevance to Daily Life | Don't get too specific, except on approved topics. | The more practical the better: sex, money, whatever. |
| 82. Salvation | From eternal damnation to heavenly bliss | Saving whom from what? Huh? |
| 83. Science and Faith | Either/Or | Both/And |
| 84. Scripture | Importance of doctrinal definitions (even if you don't actually read the Bible), such as infallibility, inspiration; interpreted by approved curriculum | Importance of understanding and living by Scripture; read the Bible more than you read books about the Bible |
| 85. Seating | Pews (Easum: "only in courtrooms and funeral homes.") | Chairs, circles, interactive, face to face |
| 86. Seminary Education of Pastors | Professional degrees expected; Advanced degree preferred | Practical skills preferred/Servant leadership |
| 87. Sequence | Behaving, then Believing, then Belonging (David Holland) | Belonging, then Believing, then Behaving |
| 88. Sermon and Sunday School Illustrations | Classical literature, famous historical character | Reality TV ("Homer Simpson is so 1990's."), comic strips, movies |
| 89. Sermons | Parent to child communication: You should, you must, and you ought NOT! NEVER! | Adult to adult communication: "Sharing"; Want to be coached, encouraged. |
| 90. Sin | "It's all about me (though I am willing to talk about 'your' sins.)" | "It's all about me." |
| 91. Stability | Values stability/Hates risk | "Here Today, Gone Tomorrow." |
| 92. Sunday School lessons on... | Sin, miracles, prayer, Melchizedek, Hezekiah | Family, hope, health, world religions |

| ISSUE | Church in 20th Century | Church in 21st Century |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 93. Technology | Adversarial attitude: "Why does the church need a FAX? Why do we need a copier? A VCR?" | How can a church function without a FAX, copiers, a VCR, a DVD, a website, and email addresses of members? Without PowerPoint? |
| 94. Testimonies | Of your conversion experience, years or decades ago | Of what happened last week or yesterday or this morning |
| 95. Theology | Systematic | Contextual |
| 96. Tradition | Valued | "What have you done for me lately?" |
| 97. Verb | Passive (see Seating) | Active (see Missions) |
| 98. Visible leadership | Older people who have earned trust | Whoever is willing to lead, including younger unknowns |
| 99. Which foot forward? | Best | Flawed: "Don't waste my time with pretense." |
| 100. Wine, beer, mixed drinks, dancing, card games, tobacco | Big deal | "You've got to be kidding?" |
| 101. Wives | Power through their husbands | Power with their husbands |
| 102. Women | Restricted roles | Any role is possible |
| 103. Words, Words, Words | Keep talking: Sunday morning, Wednesday night | Show me! Actions more important than words. |



Marion Aldridge
 Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of South Carolina
marion@cbfosc.org
www.cbfosc.org