

So What is my “Agenda?” And do I even have an agenda?

When I came for my Staff-Parish Relations Committee introductory visit, I mentioned that I could not help to notice that the church stood on a hill overlooking a major hwy. Like a “light on a hill” that is mentioned in the Scriptures, I said that I would like for Garner UMC to continue to be a light in this community. A light on a hill attracts---and I want Garner UMC to be an attractive place in every sense of the word: friendly; hospitable; professional; a place that is intentionally invitational. As the first disciples said about Jesus, “Come and see.” I want people from all around to come and see what great things God is doing in our midst.

Lest we be complacent about being that “light on the hill” and think that people will just come automatically, we have to be a beacon out into the community. We have to emit rays of God’s light into the dark and sinful world in which we live. We have to say to this world: “we love Jesus, yes we do....we love Jesus, how ‘bout you!” We have to be willing to go forth from this place in the pattern Jesus taught us---to trust him, to believe in his power, to believe that our best days are ahead of us. To do so, we must be in mission. The Jews were told to be a light to the nations and they believed that if they simply made a beautiful temple on top of a hill that persons would automatically come pouring in—just because of who they were. But when people realized that they were being excluded for being non-Jews, they chose other avenues to serve God. We must be where the people of God are---offering hope and pointing to the true light of the world.

I believe that the NC Conference mission statement is helpful here: “healthy congregations and effective leaders in every place making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”

So, these are my priorities:

That we be hospitable and invitational to all persons....and, yes, that includes acceptance of persons of all races, nations and creeds (which we say we will do when we baptize a person). That’s why I have concentrated so much on “first impressions.”

The scriptures tell us that **hospitality** is a spiritual gift. Let’s infuse the congregation with a spirit of joy! Yes, we’ve got our “issues,” but every church does....Even in hard times, God says through Paul “rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice...”

I want people to smile more! I want people to see something going on---tangible movement once we decide to do something....do it.

I want to let our visitors know that we knew that they were here and that we appreciate the fact that they were here!!

I want people to invite their friends and family to the “light on the hill.” I want folks to see us as a “church family.”

That we be “evangelical” in the traditional sense of the word: to lift up Jesus above all things.

That our **worship** services be the very best that they can be, week after week. Each week, I will prayerfully evaluate myself and all other worship leaders to see what works and what doesn't. I believe that the worship services should rotate around God's word. In the next year, I want to have three distinctively different worship services: traditional, contemporary, and blended. I will work to bring in persons from different churches and traditions to help us move in those directions. We will be making changes in worship, little by little introducing things to help us worship with more thanksgiving and joyfulness.

Evangelistic.....lift up the presence and power of the trinity whenever we can: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our worship, our fellowship opportunities, our one on one conversation, needs to be governed by the spirit of expectancy: what will God do next? We are going to target different kinds of people in our community and beyond. We want folks to come to our church who are looking for a church home...and who long for an opportunity to serve Christ with a "whole heart, mind, strength..."

That we be constantly involved with **missions** work (outreach ministry). I believe that as we grow in our outreach to the world (in the Acts 1.8 fashion) that we will grow inwardly in every manner as well. I have already suggested that we emphasize one big missions event at a time....I also want us to discover the value of overseas missions experiences.

That we value and model **Christian formation, stewardship, and leadership**.

We simply have to model the life of Jesus among the congregation....talking repeatedly about Christian formation, prayer, and studying God's word. We will simply offer Bible Study to the nth degree—encouraging folks to learn about the sweetness of God's word for their life. And also emphasizing that the word challenges us as well to become the type of disciples that we could have never imagined.

We are going to avail ourselves of leadership training opportunities and do our very best to lead God's people.

That each person would be proud and happy to be called a member of Garner UMC.