

15 Things the Church Needs to Do in 2015

It's that time of the year again, when we stand on the precipice of a new year and look forward to what is in store for us in 2015. Last year, I wrote 14 Things the Church Needs to Do in 2014, and many of them are still true for 2015.

However, given the events of 2014, the church now also has a monumental opportunity to provide healing, justice, care and compassion in new and exciting ways—ways I believe are important for the church in the upcoming year.

1. Review what happened in 2014. What worked? What didn't? Where did we spend our money? How did we touch people's lives? What one word would describe 2014? Take some time and objectively look at what transpired in 2014.

2. Honestly answer the question, "Why in the world would anyone want to come to this church?" I believe this is the biggest question that every church must ask itself. How one answers this question affects the ministry, outlook and mission of the church. If you answer this question honestly, the answer might surprise you and scare you at the same time.

3. Answer, "If we closed our doors tomorrow, who would miss us?" Is the church a place to go on Sunday morning or an impactful piece of the community? Is the church a place that is finding areas of ministry that are outside the four walls of the church? Is the church a place of community building, fellowship and service, or is it just merely existing? If the church closed tomorrow would there be a gap, a hole, a void left in the community or even a particular community?

4. Then ask the even harder question—"If no one would miss us, then what are we doing here?"

5. Speak up for the voiceless in our own backyard. Too often churches have an understanding of changing the world. Don't get me wrong—the message of Christ has that ability. But instead of constantly looking at overseas mission trip destinations, are we looking in our own backyard? Are there areas that we are missing because we think someone else is handling the problem? There are needs in any sized community—the church is called to speak up for those who cannot and be the voice they are longing to have. If the church cannot and does not speak to community, state and national issues then we are missing a big piece of the gospel.

6. Have honest conversations about race. In Ferguson, Staten Island, Ohio and everywhere in between, the complexities of race in our society have been thrown to the forefront of news, conversation and lives. Was Dr. King correct when he said that 11 a.m. on Sunday was the most segregated hour of the week? For many churches that still does seem to be the case. How the church responds to the issue of race in the 21st century will be extremely important.

7. Re-evaluate missions. What is the purpose of missions? What is our mission as followers of Christ? Is the church supporting missions that support our mission? Reviewing how the work of the church is done will focus the ministry opportunities for 2015.

8. Remember that failure is not a bad word. So you planned and planned and planned some more and your ministry idea that was supposed to bring people the good news didn't get off the ground. Well ... that's OK. Ministry is tough. Failure is never easy, but it is something we must see not as a negative but as a growing point. If we are holding back for fear of failure then we are limiting what God can do in that situation. Churches cannot simply just wait for "home runs." Ministry is more about trial and error than it is an exact science. So get out there and try something, get your hands dirty, be the hands and feet of God!

9. **Love the people, love the people, love the people.** And I mean no matter what. The church needs to strip away the cold exterior and welcome people—all people—with the loving arms of God. We need to love people for who they are, not for who we want them to be.

10. **Answer, “If someone came to this community for the first time what would their impression be?”** Some parts of the church have a reputation of being an “insiders” club. For some congregations, it is difficult for a new person to find their place or role within the community. If the same 10 people do everything in the church, how can the rest of the church have an impact? If someone were to walk into your faith community, what would their first impression be? Is the signage correct? Are things laid out well? Is there someone to greet them yet not ask 100 questions and make them fill out a commitment card? Let’s look at the church with fresh eyes and see what happens.

11. **Stop the bodies-in-the-pews game.** There is more to being a ministry of God than painstakingly counting bodies in the pews. This is does not mean people who are missing are unimportant—it means the church needs to stop defining itself by numbers physically in attendance. What if we worried about how many lives we have touched instead of the number of people that come on Sunday morning?

12. **Pray for ... everything.** Patience, peace, mercy, safety, movement of the spirit, direction. Start praying and never stop. The church, the world and our souls need it.

13. **Increase giving.** It takes faith to increase giving even during good financial stability, but even more when it times are tough. Have faith, take courage and step out and increase the giving of the church. It doesn’t have to be much, but it has to be some. Watch what happens when a little is given in faith.

14. Decrease complaining. Yes, there is a lot to do and few workers to do it. The budget may have its pitfalls and attendance is not what it once was 40 years ago, but that doesn't mean we have to let it affect us and our life. We have a lot to be thankful for. Attitude is important—especially in the church. If people are always complaining—especially about insignificant things—then this will spill over to all parts of the church.

15. Don't give up on the church. I know what Christ said—that the gates of Hell will not prevail against the church—but there are times when this feels untrue. People from all walks of life have been shunned from or have run out on a congregation for differing beliefs or theological styles. As the body of Christ we need to remember that the church is made up of imperfect people who are trying to do the will of God. While we might not like the direction the church is heading, we cannot give up on it. God has never given up on us—let's not give up on God.

Rev. Evan M. Dolive is an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He enjoys teaching, preaching, keynote speaking, leading small groups and being with his wife and three children. Follow him on social media: @RevEvanDolive on Twitter and He can be reached via email at evan@ or

For the original article, visit .