

Article from Sierra Loomis Christian Church's April 2006  
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Over the last 15 years of my full time ministry, I have wrestled with the issue of church transformation. (The first 4 years I was trying to figure out where I was supposed to be and what to do when I got there.) Over this time, the titles have changed and even the methodology has changed. However, one aspect of Transformation has remained constant: it's hard to explain!

This reality recently came back to me when I heard of some comments describing Transformation as being nothing more than making a bunch of changes just to make changes. The statement that often accompanies this concept is: "And I like my church just the way it is. I don't want it to change!"

Before our church goes any further into considering if Transformation is right for our congregation, we need to make sure we know what we're talking about...or against.

First, Transformation isn't about change. Not really. While it is true that the process of Transformation often involves change of some kind, change isn't the main issue. The main issue, the critical issue, is growing into a deeper relationship with Christ. For ourselves and for others. It's about experiencing, in a very profound and personal way, God's love and then sharing that love in a very profound way with others. It's about being faithful disciples...in word and in action...everyday.

To be able to do this; that is, grow into a deep and life-affecting relationship with Christ, we have to take seriously not only what this means to each one of us but also what it means to be a church that is called to reach out to others.

This is where the "rub" comes in. A difficult aspect of Transformation is to remember that the most important measure of Transformation is how we are growing in our love for Christ and others. But since changes are often a part of this process, we often focus on the changes and if we "like" them. Transformation isn't about change. Easy concept...hard to follow.

Over the next few months, we are going to be talking quite a bit about the process of Transformation. Are we ready for it? Are we willing to be led by God's vision to grow in faith and service? Are we willing to make some changes in order to help ourselves and others grow into a deeper love and life with Christ? And, can we focus on Transformation and not the change that may come?

May God grant us wisdom, patience, urgency and grace as we answer these questions.