

Leadership Challenges of Churches in Transition: A Study Of Three Churches

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Eleven o'clock Sunday morning has been called the most segregated hour in America; it is church time in the United States, and the time set aside to go to the various religious institution, which represent our faith. We may work together in areas of employment; we may ride the same transportation services in order to get to that work, but when it comes to spending time with thee Almighty, Americans prefer to sit next to family and friends or at least someone who looks like them.

America is a nation in constant transition, moving from one neighborhood to another, and often selecting houses of faith in these different neighborhoods.

Traditionally American lived and died in the same community; they worked the same job from young adult to retirement, and those who attended church sat in the same rows in the church occupied by their grandparents and parents.

The three churches discussed in this paper are going through transitional challenges relating to issues of leadership and diversity. St. Marks United Methodist Church (New York City) is a Black church. It is experiencing generational conflicts as it tries to deal with the postmodern challenges of ministry. The Good Shepherd United Methodist Church (Bergenfield, N.J.) is a traditional mainline White church that is having difficulty integrating a new ethnic group into the congregation.

The Riverside Church (New York City) is an interracial, interdenominational and international church. It is going through the pains of changing values and changing goals, and at the same time dealing with a senior minister's retirement. Analysis of the diversity and multicultural needs of these three churches can provide insight about the leadership strategies required to work with multicultural congregations.

St. Mark's United Methodist Church

St. Marks United Methodist Church[1] is located in the center of Harlem. It is over 100 years old and can boast of having a distinguished middle and upper middle class membership in its past. St. Mark's was a place where it was necessary to have what was considered the "proper" attire. In the Black tradition that meant wearing your "Sunday best" when going to church. The church provided after-school programs[2] during and after the Great Depression. The members of the congregation consisted of lawyers, doctors, bankers, congressmen and state senators. The choir was famous for the quality of its musicians. Some of the first Black Americans to sing with the Metropolitan Opera Company attended St. Mark's Church. The members were proud of their church, and it was there that they were given opportunities for leadership that prepared them to accept responsible positions in the secular world. The church can hold between 1,500 and 2,000 people. Its Gothic structure is similar to City College of the City University of New York, which is located within walking distance.

The area in which the church is located was considered "Sugar Hill" and was the home to an upper middle class population. As more and more members were able to purchase homes in the suburbs and hence moved their membership elsewhere, the church started to lose population.[3] Yet the church did not reach out to the new members coming into the community.[4] Eventually many of the programs were discontinued, and today the membership consists of about one hundred people, mainly seniors. The average age of the congregation is seventy-five years old. Most of these members remember the church the way it used to be and are reluctant to make any changes.

The Methodist Conference, which owns all churches in the United Methodist denomination, has threatened to merge the church with another church or close the church.[5] Although this would be a regrettable event to the St. Mark's members, they are content to live in the past and celebrate the accomplishments of the church prior to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's. Concern about the needs of the post-baby boomers were not considered in their field of interest.

Findings from Interviews

Mr. A, as I will call him, is about 80 years old. He is a retired businessman, and contributes significantly to the financial obligations of the church. He holds a prominent position on the Church Council, yet considers himself ineffective in committees dominated by women. He was the vice chairman of the Board of Directors.[6] This was the group that held power second only to the pastor and even had the responsibility of supervising the pastor. All programs were subject to their approval. When questioned why there were no youth ministry programs in the church, his answer was, "There is no space for youth programs." This was difficult to understand, since eighty percent of the church was unused. The church

was equipped with full recreational facilities, including classrooms and a gym, but they were no longer in use.

Mrs. B is a retired schoolteacher around 75 years of age. She considers herself an important leader in the church, and is reported as being the controlling voice in the church. A member of the Church Council, she is the individual responsible for the financial obligations of the church. During the interview, she indicated that she was not going to permit children running up and down ruining property. She was responsible for blocking a computer and an after-school program from coming into the church.

The Pastor is a relatively young man in his early 40's. The divorced father of a teenage son, he was reluctantly assigned to the Harlem congregation. He had been told that it was a difficult congregation with a reputation of being very difficult on pastors. I had several meetings with him concerning the issue of bring some youth-centered programs into the church. He liked the idea and indicated that he was interested in youth programs. Yet he indicated that he was "fearful" about going up against some of the older members in the church. He further indicated that he was having difficulty helping some members to understand that he was in charge of church's activities. He was reluctant to go against these individuals, and was looking forward to the time when he would be leaving the church and a replacement pastor sent in. He lacked the skills and the will to handle issues relating to the inter-generational conflict that was slowly destroying the church.

St. Mark's clearly suffers from a crisis in leadership.[7] The older members have not been willing to share space with the young, and there was no one around at the time who was able to help the church move from the past into the future. As for the pastor, fear of a congregation is not a good indication of leadership. A pastor must take the authoritative role as spiritual leader and demonstrate competence and courage as the shepherd of the flock.

Suggestions on How the Church Can Move Forward

St. Mark's Church is facing the issue of members reluctant to move into the postmodern world. The members live in the past and are unwilling to let the children of the 21st century step on the memories of the 20th century. An individual leading this congregation would need to have the skills necessary to help members respect the past while at the same time accepting the reality of the present. The leader should have strong plans for growing the church and not permit the past to destroy the future. This position requires the strategy of courage. A church without youth and family services is a dying church. The pastor or leader must have the courage to prevent him or herself from participating in the death of a church.

Other specific suggestions include:

Select a minister with a southern African American heritage. Members tend to relate to individuals that have a history and understanding of the African American experience.[8] This is not the same for all peoples of color. The members do not respond well to pastors with a lack of appreciation for the American survival experience.

Select a minister with a leadership style capable of handling the complexities of this congregation.

Select a minister with strong family ties. Members are not ready to accept ministers with different sexual orientation, an issue that is currently roiling the United Methodist Church.[9] The Black Church has still some strong reservations on the question of the sexual orientation of its pastors. The United Methodist Church is not a Black religious organization. St. Mark's United Methodist Church, although a predominately African American congregation, is nevertheless in the organizational structure and guideline of a White organization.

Change the music to attract a younger audience

Rebuild the Sunday School

Attract and encourage individuals with skills and talents in youth ministry to join the church. The church has an obligation to help the community, not a choice.

The Good Shepherd United Methodist Church

The second church to be discussed is the Good Shepherd United Methodist Church in Bergenfield, NJ, a largely White church. Bergenfield is a small community in Bergen County, considered one of the best places to live in the country with its excellent schools, senior citizen services, low crime rate, and excellent health facilities. As of the 2000 census it had 26,247 residents, 16,509 of whom are White, 1,811 are African American, 63 Native American, 5,357 Asian and 1,696 others. The median income was

\$71,187. Each of the major denominations has at least one church in the community. This case reports the events that occurred when a non-White pastor was assigned to the church.

A few years ago, a young minister from the Caribbean was assigned to the church. He was soft spoken and low keyed. He had no programs and no ideas for change. His services were not particularly interesting, but there were no apparent objections from within the church. The White congregation was content to follow his leadership, as long as he did not upset the status quo. The leadership style of the pastor was “go along to get along.” The pastor understood that the church was not a “program church,” and as such he did not make any changes. He was also very young. This was his second assignment in the New Jersey conference, and he was selected for this appointment because, as he said, “they thought I would fit in.” An African-American would not have been selected, but this pastor was from the Caribbean; therefore, he did not present any social threat to the established order.

There were about seventy-five to one hundred members in the church, which could seat about three hundred. The Church had a full choir, composed of members who, although they liked to sing, had little or no musical talents. There were frequent changes of choir director. The choir director matched the musical skills of the choir members. I remember some years ago hearing the pastor say that the church was full of “John Birch”[10] members. He apologized to the author at one time, because he said he knew the sermons and the music did not have any feeling, yet they were appropriate to the community in which it is situated.

Change began to take place in the community and the church with the increase in the Asian population, particularly a large and growing Filipino population. The population was large enough to elect one of its group as mayor, which in turn attracted more members of the group to the town. Bergenfield today has the largest Filipino population in Bergen County, and this Filipino population, which has a large Methodist population in their home country,[11] was naturally attracted to the Good Shepherd Church. This was the beginning of change and conflict.

Meanwhile, the members of the Good Shepherd Church were aging, as was the community. Many of the younger families have moved further north and purchased larger homes, leaving their parents and grandparents in the church. As a senior citizen population, they were not interested in programs or social action. Their mission activities included supporting far away missions in countries they would never see, and they believed that no member of those countries would ever come over into their community.

Influential was the Methodist Women,[12] a group that met once a month in one of the member’s homes. Methodist Women groups are a powerful arm of the Methodist Church, and according to the bylaws all female members are automatically invited to join the organization. The Good Shepherd women’s group was operated like an exclusive social club and made it clear that it was not interested in extending an invitation to the new comers. The group did not accept any new members, and since they controlled all activities of the women and programs in the church, there were no programs.

Then new families started to come to the church; the families were young and had school age children. The children attended the local schools and were doing well in the community. A Philippine Methodist minister brought over his congregation, and they became involved in the spiritual community of the church, and encouraging a new “Praise and Worship” Service. At the same time this was happening, there was also an increase in the Caribbean population. A few Africans recently arrived from the continent of Africa also came to the church. The minister, who had up until this time been low key, began to become excited about the possibility of having a program type ministry. There were children, there were young families, and there were immigrants who needed services. These were exciting times for this young minister. Yet, excitement about attending the new church elicited murmurs of discontent among the old established German-based group.

Findings from Interviews

The new members indicated that they had initiated the request for the “Praise and Worship,” section to be included in the church service. They also indicated that they wanted their children to be able to play their musical instruments during the service. Some of the children had learned a spiritual dance, which they wanted to perform during the regular service.

The old conservative members of the church found it difficult to accept the new spirituality of the younger members. In a conversation held with the president of the Methodist Women’s club, the question of some of the younger female members of the church joining the organization came up. The president stated, “It would be impossible because the club was inactive, and they would gather at friend’s houses every now and then to meet.” This information was given to the pastor, who suggested that the younger women start their own organization.

Another old time member of the church expressed displeasure with the way the church was being operated. It appeared that issues concerning some of the conflicts in the church had little to do with the racial tension, and more to do with the leadership style of the pastor.

In several other interviews also, members expressed concern about the management and leadership style of the pastor. After that pastor departed, other members of the church said that there were serious problems not discussed. This could suggest that where there are hidden unresolved issues, the introduction of a diverse congregation may be used as a mask to cover up real issues and concerns.

Suggestions: How the Good Shepherd Could Handle Issues Facing the Church

Request the Conference to appoint a pastor of the Church with experience in handling multicultural issues.

Have the governing Board of the Methodist Women address the issue of exclusion, which is not permitted in the UMC

Have the New Jersey Northern Conference provide more assistance to a struggling Church

Discuss with lay leaders and members the reality of who is located in the small town, what is the denominations of the citizens of the town, and what steps are needed to strengthen the survival of the church given its location in that town

The Riverside Church

Riverside Church in New York City is sixty percent Black, yet it is not a Black Church; this is a source of confusion for many of the members who believed that the membership determines the category of a church. The theology and purpose of a Black Church, formed out of its unique history and heritage, are totally different from the theology of an interracial and culturally diverse church. Riverside is a Social Justice Church, interested in issues facing the world regardless of race or nationality. Riverside Church is, as it has always been, the flagship of American Protestantism, speaking truth to power.

A few years ago a favorite senior minister retired after eighteen years of service, and the last few years in the church have been difficult. There has been tension and conflict over issues relating to leadership style and the satisfaction of some members of the congregation. This case study relates to some of the events and concerns that developed as the results of clerical transitions in the church that started with the retirement of its senior minister.

The former senior minister had what could be referred to as a passive-aggressive authoritarian leadership style. He was soft spoken but maintained total control of the operation of the church. The church has ten paid clergy on staff. Each clergy person is responsible for a specific area of the church and its programs. It was obvious that the senior minister was in charge, and the other members of the clergy staff played supportive roles that did not challenge the leadership authority of the senior minister. They seldom had an opportunity to preach a sermon and were usually relegated to reading announcements or scripture.

There was also the question of the church's financial support of programs supervised by the supporting clergy staff. Some of the clergy stated that their assistants and clerical staff have been reduced significantly, and in recent years there has been considerable staff turnover. Recently the church hired its fourth youth minister in three years.

With the retirement of the senior minister, there has been a significant change in the leadership styles of the clergy staff. The interim senior minister shares responsibility with the other members of the clergy staff. Each Sunday the clergy alternate and preach at the Sunday morning service. During weekdays, active participation from the clergy can be seen. The church is in the process of searching for a new senior minister, and during this interim period the church is in the process of redefining itself.[13]

Findings from Interviews

Interviews with members of the Church revealed that the members fell into three categories.

The first category consists of members who were in a state of deep depression. They had become members in the last five years, and all attended special services conducted by the senior pastor, especially services held during the midweek. They felt very close to the pastor, and considered him a personal friend and spiritual guide. They were usually African American or Caribbean, college graduates, and professionals. This group tended to be the more confused over the difference between a Black church and a multicultural social justice institution.

Members in the second group[14] expressed a sense of delight that the senior minister was leaving. They indicated that during the past five years the church had changed and was no longer a social activist church, but was slowly becoming an African American church, preaching and teaching Black Theology. This group was not interested in Black Theology or Liberation Theology, but was more interested on issues relevant to the national, international,[15] and political climate of the day. This group believed that the DNA of the church was social justice issues, tended to be White[16] with long standing memberships of twenty years or more, professional and concerned about the direction of the church.

Members in the third group were willing to accept the new leadership of the Church. They were dedicated to the Church, its history and its mission, and had been in the church long enough to see many changes take place. This group was involved in various ministries in the Church that were not affected by the senior minister. They viewed themselves as Christian, and their membership was their Christian witness. This group tended to be the backbone of what is called the “Inters”: interracial, interreligious, and interdenominational. They are concerned with the mission of the church rather than with political factors within the church.

Based on these interviews, it can be concluded that the greatest challenges to transformational leadership will be the following:

How to bring the three groups together under one senior minister?

Who will be the person selected to lead the diverse congregation?

How will the church decide the direction it is willing to take?

Will the Rockefeller family approve the selection?

What is Riverside looking for in a senior pastor?

What are the qualifications needed for ministry at this level?

Dealing with the “stolen cheese”[17] mental attitudes of some of the members.

The Leadership Role of Riverside Church

The Riverside Church is not a Black church. Its history and experiences are different from the Black Church in America. Riverside Church is more like America, the country. People come to America from all over the world looking for a second chance and a spiritual transformation in their lives and their future. America says welcome, drop your hatreds and feelings of superiority and inferiority at the water's edge and the airports, and join us in this newest experiment of God's Kingdom on earth. Learn how to put differences aside and work for the common good of all. The Riverside Church, as the church of America, welcomes the gifts, talents and diversity of the country and the world and says, Drop your fears at the front steps, this is God's house and we have prepared a feast for you. There is room at the table; come and eat.

The church, unfortunately, has divided itself into two institutions. The congregation, with all its cultural diversity and underlying social issues, still struggles to be the nice church as America struggles to be the “nice” country. There is no reference in sermons or music to the differences within the congregation. In the second institution, the social and religious mission of the church is carried out. The hungry are fed and the needy are cared for. The meaning and mission of the church comes alive in the second institution. Thousands of people come to Riverside Church for social and educational services during the weekday. They are grateful for the church and its mission.

The leadership skills and strategies required to pastor a church of this size and complexity are demanding. A pastor who becomes sensitive to and involved in all of the emotional details of congregational leadership would burnout in a short period of time. The church requires strong management skills and a plan vision for the organization and management of a multimillion-dollar institution. The pastor, therefore, should have the same skills as those required to manage a Fortune 500 corporation, with people, goods and services. At the same time, this individual should have excellent academic and theological preparation, even the background and training of a college professor.

In Riverside Church, the church has expanded its depth. With the increase in the Black population came awareness among Whites that their perceptions of peoples of color may be wrong. It is here in the church where the concept that all men are made in the image and likeness of God must become a spiritual thought pattern. Sitting in the seat next to you will be hundreds of Black men and their families, and they are making a significant contribution. Riverside Church as the flagship of American Protestantism causes other churches to look at their multicultural populations.

The Black membership begs the question: Are the traditional Christian mainline churches really providing an open arm to a diverse population, or is the Christian Church a “White” Jesus church for people who look like a White God? The Black population thus causes the church to pay more attention to its true self. In the American experiment, the Black man forced the new country to redefine itself and to live up to the visions set down by the forefathers. The Black man is the lightning rod that constantly shakes up the society and turns it upside down when it is on the wrong path. The Black man came to the Riverside Church and ripped its seams wide open. The Riverside Church with its in-your-face approach to issues forces the congregation to look at the ugly hidden face of racism and it bring up front for discussion.

Members of the church representing category one recommended the selection of a distinguished young African American clergyman for the position of senior minister. The appointment was approved with a slight majority, suggesting problems within the congregation were still unresolved. This well respected, highly educated and spiritually centered young man resigned after only two months in the position. The conflicts in the church grew wider, returning to its initial position. The Riverside Church now grieved over the departure of two pastors; this departure caused the church to engage in significant discussion of racism in America and in the church. However, the problem, as viewed by this writer and member, is not about race. It is rather a question of leadership in a transitional period for churches.

Suggestions: How the Riverside Church Can Address the Issue of Transition

The Riverside Church can review the mission of the Founding Fathers of the church, Fosdic and Rockefeller. These men set out to do a new thing in a time of change and expectation. They built a church responsive to the surrounding community with its growing needs and changing populations. The Rockefellers considered the Riverside Church as stewards of their wealth given in the service of others. They built a church large enough to welcome all people into the house of God. The Church was not designed to follow the traditional guidelines of the mainline churches of Europe, but rather to be an American Church that encouraged diversity and dedication to social justice for all.

Hence, today the church celebrates its interracial, interdenominational and international character. Yet new members joining the Church are unaware of its history or mission, and sometimes desire to want the church to reflect the traditional services represented by specific denominations. This is especially true as regards sermon style and musical formats. Riverside Church has not significantly provided enough time and orientation to new members for them to understand the mission of the church and how it differs from mainline churches, specifically how it is different from the Black Church. It is the role of the senior minister to teach and preach the mission of the church and its ministry.

The senior minister needs to lift up the social justice mission of the church. He or she should be about reminding the congregation that they come to church to learn how to be the hands of God giving service to the world, that Riverside is not a church where members come to feel good, but to learn how to do good. In that regard, the church provides its own institution through which they can give their gifts and talents in the service of others. Sermons are preached on Sunday, but they are operational in the church’s building Monday through Saturday. The senior minister should encourage the membership to put the Sunday morning sermons to use starting Monday morning.

Here are some other specific suggestions for Riverside Church:

Appoint a new senior pastor as soon as possible, someone with the theological background, corporate management skills and commitment to the mission of social justice who will be a good fit for the church

Encourage younger members to come into the church, and extend the New Membership class to include sufficient time to understand the mission and the purpose of the church

Remind the congregation that Riverside is a teaching church

Return to the original format of the Space for Grace Church within a Church. Space for Grace was originally intended to follow a Pentecostal format.

Focus on what is good about the Church rather than its problems.

Conclusion

This report discussed three different churches serving three different communities. Yet a careful analysis reveals that they are different congregations with the same problems. The problem relates to the role of the pastor as transformational leader in the lives of people who come to the church searching for answers and directions. These congregations are a representation of who and what America is and the challenges she is and must face. Those of us who work with congregations in outreach programs must understand the people and the diversity of their cultures and expectations.

The congregations are American, and at the heart of America is change. We cannot use the sociological systems traditionally coming out of Europe to understand the American situation. In Europe, class is a constant. Socio-economic status is usually a constant. In America, by the time one uses any sort of class-based social analysis, the players will have changed. Americans have short memory spans, and what was once a problem or an enemy may tomorrow be a challenge and growth.

In America the country is better[18] than the people.[19] The views and values of the people do not always reflect the positions of the country. It is the same in many churches. The church is better than the congregation. The country holds high standards that each citizen must reach for. The mission of the church exceeds the wishes and desires of the congregation. America works because she operates on this principle. Churches that are effective also work for the same reason. We must all seek to be guided by the Holy Spirit, and let our better angels guide and direct our feet.

There is no other nation in the world where descendants of white slaves, black slaves, white indentured servants, black indentured servants, white slave owners, black slave owners, convicts, settlers and the rejects of the world can transform themselves to professionals and outstanding citizens. In America, the past does not predict the future, and this is true in the field of religion and ministry. Americans by nature adjust to change and adversity, and she grows, kicking and screaming, into a better world.

In one of the churches[20] discussed in this report, the white German community was hostile to the diverse population moving into the community and into the church. Yet careful observation will reveal that senior German women were going by the homes of the children and bringing them to Sunday school and Church. You would see a small brown hand resting carefully in the safety and security of the adopted mother for the day. The American system is at work. Sometimes the congregation is ahead of the pastor. Sometimes the Holy Spirit moves in its own good time to do the work of the Father. The future of the church lies in the theology of the Holy Spirit and the sociology of the family of God, as we are all one—made in His image.

Notes

[1] St. Mark's Church provides an excellent example of the role played by the Black Church in leadership training, managing large organizations, and understanding the complexities of group dynamics.

[2] These after-school programs were responsible for the high academic achievements of students in the African American communities. The church was the academic support service for the schools.

[3] Some members tried to stay in the community, but there was a significant decline of the academic progress in the public schools, and many parents moved to where their children would have a better chance for an educational opportunity.

[4] The new members moving into the community represented the large influx from the Caribbean and Africa. The Caribbean and African population did not receive a welcome response from the members of the Central Harlem community, and as such found it difficult adjusting to the cultural differences between the African-American, Caribbean and the African. The church did make an attempt to bring in Caribbean ministers as assistant pastors.

[5] "American Methodist churches are generally organized on a connectional model, related but not identical to that used in Britain. Pastors are assigned to congregations by bishops, distinguishing it from presbyterian government. Methodist denominations typically give lay members representation at regional and national meetings (conferences) at which the business of the church is conducted, making it different from an episcopal government. This connectional organizational model differs further from the congregational model, for example of Baptist and Congregationalist Churches." "Methodism," Wikipedia. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodism.

[6] One of the major changes in the church is the representation of women in major seats of power. Women served on committees and in supportive positions of worship, they did not however, have controlling power in the operation and management of the church and its programs. Today, most of the individuals in decision-making power in the church are women, and most of the people who block programs and activities are women. The biggest problem newly assigned pastors to the church have is often how to solve the women control issue.

[7] The previous pastor wanted to bring in a computer program into the church but was told by one of the board members that computers were not necessary. This member stated that she used pen and pencils to do all of her work, and did not see the need for computers. The author was a witness to the remark.

[8] African-Americans have a heritage that is different from other groups of color. Their experience through the institution of slavery and their violent oppression and hatred after slavery forges their common history. African-American congregations draw strength from that common history, a history of travels and survival after leaving the Egypt of their bondage. When the pastor touches that thread of connection, the people respond. They are not interested in the stories of other survivals; they want to know if the pastor knows their story.

[9] In a statement written some years ago when the previous pastor was in office for a short period of time, it is possible to see some of the problems facing the church before the arrival of this pastor. The previous pastor, Rev. Caldwell, was an African American and was not well received. Thus a 1997 letter in the Record Spring: "United Methodist Church pastors have launched a gay rights campaign by the distribution of a statement arguing for the ordination of gay men and lesbians and same-gender union rites. One of the signers, Gilbert Caldwell, is pastor of Harlem's St. Mark's UMC: 'I am an African-American, and... we, too, know what marginalization means.'" www.ecinc.org/Records/rec_sprng97.htm As the new pastor of St. Mark's at the time, it would have been better for him to focus on improving outreach to the community.

[10] Referring to the John Birch Society stereotypically understood as a WASP organization, not necessarily to their politics.

[11] While the Philippines is 83 percent Catholic, the country has been influenced for more than 100 years by Protestant missionaries who began arriving after the United States annexed the islands from Spain in 1898. Today there are thriving Methodist congregations there.

[12] Methodist Women are an official arm of the United Methodist Church. It is a powerful organization. It holds monthly meetings, and attends conferences to discuss church activities. Each UMC has a Methodist Women's unit. They are funded by the denomination, and they have a major say in the operations of the church. The Methodist Women at The Good Shepherd Church considered the organization their private club, and they went out of their way to exclude members.

[13] An article written in the New York Times, "Riverside's Pastor at Center of Turmoil" (May 18, 1992). www.nytimes.com/1992/05/18/nyregion/riverside-s-pastor-at-center-of-turmoil.html, addressed some of these concerns at Riverside. Rev. James A. Forbes Jr., pastor Emeritus, discussed the special conflicts of a congregation in racial transition. Retrieved April 24, 2012.

[14] "With race and class differences in a congregation come differences in what 'church' means to its worshipers. In the African-American context, for example, worship that deeply edifies head and heart, not just 'thoughtful' sermons, is important. Older members have a difficult choice: to embrace changes such as including emotions in worship or to rally against changes that will make the church more meaningful to those who are becoming the congregational majority. These changes can be an excellent though not pain-free way to enhance their own spirituality... The struggles at Riverside Church mirror the challenges facing Protestantism in New York City and, increasingly, across the country." "Riverside Controversy Reveals Conflicts of Racial Transition," The New York Times (May 24, 1992) www.nytimes.com/1992/05/24/opinion/1-riverside-controversy-reveals-conflicts-of-racial-transition-088192.html. Retrieved April 24, 2012

[15] This group preferred the senior minister to actively engage the government in discussions. They tend to be a left of center. They are the individuals who fight for social justice. They are anti-war, and very upset about issues in Iraq. This group persuaded the senior minister to speak out the pulpit on the National and International policies of the government. One Sunday Dr. Forbes told the congregation that the legal representatives of the church corporation had informed him that he had to be careful what he said, so as not to transgress the legal separation of church and state.

[16] "As congregations like Riverside change, some older members will be angry with changes in the church. Whites have little experience being a minority, being multicultural or sharing control. This anger is almost never expressed directly." "Riverside Controversy," op. cit.

[17] Johnson Spenser, *Who Stole My Cheese?* (G.P. Putnam, 1998).

[18] The country contains the vision for America as set down by the Founding Fathers. The country is driven by its vision and not by its people. The people are often dragged kicking and screaming in to the future of a better hope for the country.

[19] The people come from all over the world. They bring with them their frustrations and prejudices. It is the Holy Spirit wrestling the devils of their human nature, which makes this miracle called America work.

[20] The Good Shepherd Church demonstrated the ability and the willingness to work as a Christian family with the children of the church. A considerable amount of time was spent in intergenerational activities.