



Hope Happens

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Mt Zion, York is on the Road to Increased Vitality

By Cathy Sherry

The Road to Vitality is an initiative taken on by the Penn Central Conference to help reinvigorate congregations by helping them to be more spiritually rooted so that they can become more outward focused. Capital Campaign funds help to supplement the cost our congregations have to pay. During the first year of the program with the help of training sessions and the book Unbinding the Gospel, congregations are guided through a process of becoming reconnected with their own personal and congregational faith development and then gradually, learning ways to shift their focus towards being more welcoming and accommodating to others, especially those who are unchurched. Mt. Zion has many gifts and in many ways, is already a thriving congregation—but through the Road to Vitality, we hope to become an even closer, faithfully intentional congregation; one that will welcome others into our midst with open arms.

Last spring, Mt. Zion applied and was accepted into the program by the Penn Central Conference Congregational Vitality Team. In June, six congregation members, repre-

senting various areas and interests of the congregation and our two pastors, began

the book. Some of these changes included the addition of a children's area in the

have had an impact on their worship experience.

The next step was to identify 20% of the worshipping congregation—people of different backgrounds, experiences, varying skills and gifts and perspectives. In the beginning of January, these members were invited to attend a meeting to ask questions and hear even more specific insights into how our Road to Vitality has personally impacted participants. What they heard is that the Road to Vitality (and the book Unbinding the Gospel) is good for our congregation because it will be transformative for our spiritual lives on an individual level. Through Unbinding the Gospel and the group discussions, faith is deepened and explored in ways that encourage, strengthen and give more energy both for your daily life and also for your church life.

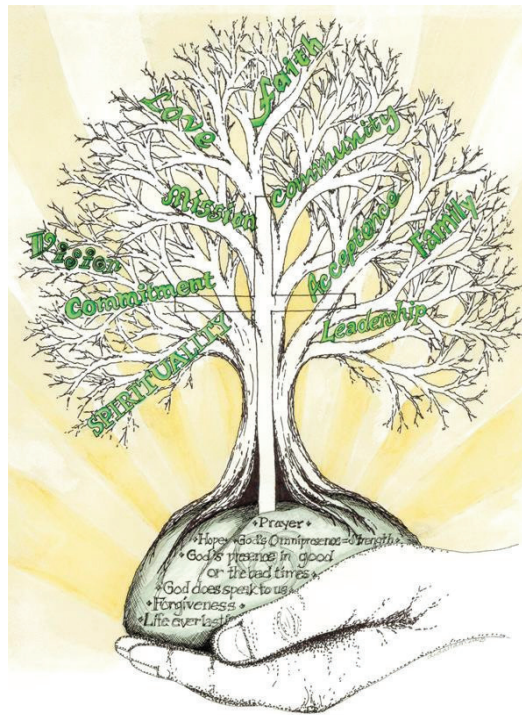
These members were then asked to commit to read the book over the course of five months, join a small group that meets **once a month** for those five months to talk about Unbinding the Gospel and participate in the transformation at Mt Zion.

Cathy Sherry is Sr. Pastor of Mt Zion, York.

reading Unbinding the Gospel and attending training sessions.

September through December of 2010 was spent reading Unbinding the Gospel and doing the 40 Days of Prayer. In November, the team planned worship services and implemented some small changes in the layout of the narthex and bulletin as a way to introduce the congregation to some of the insights the team had after engaging with

narthex, rearranging tables to allow for better movement, a new usher and greeter system that allowed for more personal contact and interaction and reinstating the use of name tags to be more welcoming to guests. Already we have had guests comment to Mt. Zion staff about the helpfulness of the name tags, the friendliness of the ushers, the addition of visitor's parking, and the convenience of the children's area. Even long time members feel they



No Matter Who You Are, You Are Welcome at Soul Link

Rev. Sharon Littrell, pastor of Soul Link in Mansfield, one of our two new church starts shared this a while ago and it is a good example of why Penn Central Conference wants to do new church starts and why putting money from the Capital Campaign towards New Church Starts is so important.

By Sharon Littrell

During worship a few months ago, one of our new members helped with communion. Now this, in itself, is not unusual because I encourage people to help with church to make it successful. Ultimately, it is the congregation that makes church succeed.

This new member, confined to a motorized wheelchair, with one arm that barely works, held the bread in his working hand for all the congregation to come forward to partake. As they came forward, I offered a healing blessing with oils at the back

of the church. The two serving communion – one in a wheelchair, the other who works for a community organization for individuals with special needs – were in themselves unusual. Even so, the most unusual part was still to come.

In our congregation, we serve those who cannot come forward in their seat. So, our new member wheeled his chair to the pew where a 92-year-old woman waited for communion. As he got to her, he adjusted his chair so that she would not have to reach too far, and held out the bread as far as his arm could reach. She took her piece and then, from our other server, took the juice cup. After he finished serving this woman he wheeled back and she walked back to serve each other..

I watched this from the back of the church. First, our wheelchair-bound young man held out the bread to his co-server, she took her piece and

consumed her juice, then she took the bread and offered it to him. At that point, he needed more help to get the bread and juice so another congregation member came forward to help. I could only stare as these three helped each other with this sacred meal.

As a church planter when I came to Mansfield, I expected to attract professors and their families to our new church. For the most part, they have stayed away.. What we have is the most diverse congregation in the county. We have diversity in race, education, income, ability, disability, age and singing ability.

Our congregation is small – growing – but small. Yet, we have the biggest hearts of any congregation I have ever known. If church is about everything and everyone being part of God's place, then we ARE church. And I thank God that we are!

Hartman Center Phase One Addition is a Blessing

“What a blessing” is the comment most heard when people see the completed phase one of the multi-purpose building at Hartman Center. Campers who came this past summer were very thankful for the air conditioned environment not only for meals but also for the weekly talent night. One of the most popular parts of the meals is the salad bar that is set up every lunch and dinner. We no longer have to push the dining tables together to make room for the salad bar. It is now set up in the expanded area.

The new area allowed the record number of 130 participants at our fall youth retreat in November to spread out for different activities and the youth loved the new lounge area by the fireplace.

Community participation and excitement has picked up as well. We have been able to host activities for the local chamber of commerce and when they see the wonderful facility, we have had inquiries and subsequent bookings.

If you have not yet seen the completed phase one addition, make plans for a trip to Hartman Center. This is a facility the entire conference can be proud of, after all, it's your outdoor ministry facility.

4 Our Churches Capital Campaign Update

Our Goal = \$4.2 million

How much has been pledged:
\$1,631,104

How much we have received:
Pledged: \$958,270
Non-pledged: \$220, 162
TOTAL = \$1,178,432

How many churches have
pledged: 93 out of 204

How many individuals have
pledged: 143