

The New Real Church

It was very uplifting to have Sarai label us as, "**The New Real Church**" which she described as follows:

No great commitment to a building

In the past, congregations have devoted much of their time, money, and attention to building and maintaining a building. TLPC has demonstrated that it is comfortable with space of many sizes and shapes and prefers to commit most of the "building" portion of its time, money, and attention to fellowship and outreach. (One of the aspects of having its own building that it does miss, however, is the utility of having a consistent space with which to do things like hold committee meetings or music practice.)

No fulltime pastor (Tent-maker Minister)

Again unlike congregations of the past, the TLPC congregation does not expect it will be the sole focus of the pastor's time and attention. It understands that its resources are limited and that sharing the time of the pastor with another institution enables it to pay a fair wage for the pastoral care it receives.

Sustained by a strong laity

TLPC realizes that, for a part-time ministry model to succeed, the laity needs to take on some of the pastoral work. It is sustained by committed lay people who are willing to do everything from room set-up to worship leadership.

Using denominational identity as a drop-down menu

TLPC benefits from having the resources of two denominations at its disposal, but it also realizes that, in a market-driven world, it literally has a whole world of resources from which to draw for everything from book group material to consultants on congregational life.

No set worship space

Many congregations over the years have seen the hidden benefits in having to do something like moving worship to the basement when their sanctuary is being remodeled, and almost always describe these temporary moves as allowing some of the best worship experiences they've ever had. TLPC has the advantage of always having a very flexible worship space which can change as it does.

Open to change

Most congregations experience a deep struggle with change. TLPC literally has change in its DNA because of its journey from one worship space to another over time. This gives it the deep advantage of knowing how to navigate new challenges. Its stability lies in its members, not in its bricks and mortar.

New definition of regular attendance

In the past, "regular" attendance has meant attending worship every Sunday of the year with the exception of one or two. TLPC is successfully adapting to two different and emerging meanings of "regular" attendance—families who think of themselves as regular if they attend once/month and families who think of themselves as regular if they attend during only some months of the year.

More flow between boxes

While members at TLPC are clearly committed to and loyal to this congregation, they are looking to their young people for a new model of relating to other congregations, in which TLPC programs are easily offered to other congregations and the programs of other congregations are viewed as opportunities for TLPC. This pattern is demonstrated well by the young people in the congregation, who move from one youth group and activity to another and feel welcomed in other congregations' settings.