

An Unleashed Church?

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By Pastor Jim Emig

Well, I think the time has come to get back on the bicycle. For the last couple of years, I have not taken the time to ride, as I have been getting used to life in Kiowa and the job of being a pastor. I am looking forward to my 50th birthday, and I know that aging will go better for me if I remain in some sort of shape. So, I have been looking for some exercise equipment and trying to figure out how everything will work. When I lived in Denver, I just drove to the health club, worked out, and came home. Now, I have to do everything at home, and finding a spot for everything is much more difficult. It is not a problem I will enjoy overcoming, but if I want to remain healthy, I need to do it.

Remaining healthy as we age is difficult. It is hard. It is necessary. This is just as true for our church as it is for us personally. We are preparing to celebrate our 100th year of serving God, and we need to understand that our ability and methods of doing so have changed. As we develop as a church, as our town grows and changes, we need to change the ways in which we touch the community.

Twenty-five years ago or so, Frank Tillapaugh wrote a book entitled, "The Church Unleashed." In the book, he describes two different types of churches: the fortress church and the unleashed church. The unleashed church is one that develops ministries within the community, targeting groups in need of assistance. As the assistance is provided, those people are touched by God's mercy and gospel. The church is unbounded, not restricted by the size of the church building or property. The fortress church is one in which all of the ministries take place within the church building and are directed to the church members. Only by entering the building and joining the church will you be ministered by the church. As a church ages, it is drawn toward the fortress model, being less likely to reach outside of itself to minister to the community.

I believe that Kiowa Creek Community Church is in a position to become an unleashed church. We have the opportunity to reach out beyond our walls and minister to people who might not otherwise know that we exist. Session has been considering the possibility of establishing a daycare center downstairs at the Fellowship Hall. The need for daycare is well documented in Kiowa and, if we can begin to provide this service for young parents, we can begin to show mercy not only to them, but to the children as well. I believe that supporting a program like this not only will offer us the chance for numerical growth but also for spiritual growth.

Also, I am proposing that the sub-basement of the Fellowship Hall be finished and opened as a youth center. I believe that these are two ministries that we can begin, which will reach out to target groups that we have previously ignored and which will help us to continue to develop the life necessary for us to stay in spiritual shape. I know that some will be bothered that our church building is being used to house these programs. After all, what if the building is damaged? Certainly, if these ministries are started, there will be less space to do the things that we currently do. That is true, but just as in my situation, we will need to decide what our priorities need to be. If getting back into shape is important to me, then I will make the necessary sacrifices and move the furniture around so that the exercise equipment has its space. Are we willing, as a church, to make the sacrifices to allow this church to get into fighting shape and to begin to steal back from Satan

that which he has stolen from God?