

## A SUMMARY OF OUR CONGREGATION

### OUR THOUGHTS, PROBLEMS, AND SOLUTIONS

The participants of the Lay Academy Program have concluded the training program with the following synopsis of our church:

#### I Our Thoughts About Us

- A. The members of our congregation are primarily of Japanese descent, and the majority are English speaking. There are very few school-age children attending church on a regular basis, and most of the members are over 40.
- B. The majority of the members are conservative in nature.
- C. Our building is a two-story Victorian situated on a corner in a quiet all-white residential neighborhood. Services are conducted on the first floor, the vicar's office is on the second floor, and the social hall is in the basement.
- D. The members have three fund-raising projects annually - a food booth in Japantown during the Sakura Matsuri (Cherry Blossom Festival), a garage and food sale during the summer, and a Sukiyaki Dinner in the fall. The three regular social events are a brunch on Mother's Day, an Easter Sunday Egg Hunt and Luncheon, and a picnic in the fall.

#### II Our Problems

- A. A strategy of the Lay Academy is to eliminate conflict and achieve harmony between English-speaking and Japanese-speaking members. A part of the conflict may be attributed to personalities. A few families have even left the church due to the conflict among the members. Some people have left because they felt they were unwelcomed.
- B. There is a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the school-age children to attend social outings and Sunday School attendance has dropped considerably.
- C. The majority of the members tend to be conservative in nature; hence, there is a lack of leadership, aggressiveness, and ambition. As a result, we have been unable to achieve our goals of growth in membership and financial security and stability.

- D. Although our building is charming in appearance, some members feel worshipping in a structure designed for living is not as gratifying as one designed specifically for worship. The feelings are mixed in the description of this structure. Some say it is musty, others describe it as being homey, and others even call it dreary.

Because we are located in a densely populated residential area, parking has been a problem; and some members have stopped coming to church because of this problem.

- E. The majority of the members feel the number of fund-raising projects should be reduced with more emphasis on greater profits.

### III The Solutions and Recommendations to our Problems

- A. To alleviate the conflict between the English-speaking and Japanese-speaking groups, we should hold discussions between the two groups with the vicar acting in a neutral capacity. A greater effort should be made to talk to one another and to listen. We should value the opinions and ideas of others, be friendly, and avoid making non-constructive criticisms.
- B. We can only assume that our teen-age children lack interest in the church social activities because of their commitments elsewhere. The younger children usually come to church if their parents do. Those parents should be encouraged to come regularly.
- C. There are various ways of approaching the membership problems. Often, newcomers are attracted to a church because of the priest. Most parishioners prefer short, interesting sermons -- the attention span is usually no more than five minutes. The priest should greet the newcomers at the end of the service and display a warm, friendly attitude. They should be invited to sign the guest book.

The priest and members of the church should share the responsibility of being aware of newcomers and to be considerate of their interests and needs. They should be invited to participate in activities where interest is shown, and their talents should be utilized. Regardless of the differences in language, members should display friendliness and warmth. Newcomers should be introduced to core members of the church; and their visits should be followed by telephone calls and visitation, if appropriate, by the priest and members.

- D. Some families have stopped coming to our church during the past year. Whenever a member leaves the church, the priest should contact the person immediately to discuss the reasons for leaving. We should show that we care and that their membership is important to us.
- E. The group had no recommendations for changes or improvements to the building.
- F. The problem of parking, which was one of the reasons for some members to leave the church, has been partially alleviated. We have received permission from the police department to allow double parking on the street.
- G. Hopefully, the number of fund raisers can be decreased. The group has recommended that a committee or committees be organized to determine which fund raisers can be eliminated and to explore other methods of raising funds with greater profits. The members would also like to have more social functions interspersed throughout the calendar year. Some suggestions were: a game night, sports night, cooking classes, and field trips. These activities would also include children.

In conclusion, we must stop to look at what we are and face the problems; for, if we are unable to accept the problems, there can be no solutions.