

I was asked to speak on what Caldwell will look like in 25 years. The scary part of that statement is that I will be 97 years of age. Also, I want you to know that I plan to be here to see if what I have to say will come true. For the record I will be preparing for my own centennial so I hope you'll mark your calendars and join me in 2037.

In order to project forward 25 years I took a look back to understand what has made Caldwell what it is today and see if we will continue grow for next 25 years. Beth has done a great job for our centennial in sharing the history of Caldwell. As I look at what has taken place the last few years a few things stand out in my mind as keys that are critical to Caldwell's growth:

- The crafting and implementing of the Caldwell Mission.
- The willingness to embrace change, always trying something new
- The extremely high level of volunteering
- The chemistry of Sunday worship.

Caldwell Mission

I don't know about you, but each Sunday I read the bulletin and always read the last page as a reminder of why I'm here and not somewhere else. Please take out your bulletin and I'll quickly point out what words resonate with me.

- Diverse
- Community
- Joyful worship
- Social Action
- God's call

- Missional Community
- Young and old
- Gay and Straight
- Rich and Poor
- All ethnicities
- Values each member
- Embrace Change
- Challenge injustice
- Proclaim the Gospel in both word and deed.

A very powerful list of words. A corner stone for the future growth of Caldwell.

Recently I listened to a political strategist Mathew Dowd discussing why Romney lost the election. Just to let you know this is not a political statement, but I believe that there are some lessons learned for churches. He felt that Romney didn't recognize the 'Modern Family' but was positioned back in the 'Mad Man' era of the 1950's. He stated that 25 years ago 90% of the voters were white males. Today that is not the case. There are the Latino voters, the African-American voters, unmarried women voters, young people, gay/lesbian voters, etc. Today we see a changing America. As I see it those institutions that don't become a 'colorful place' will not be around. Take a look at the Caldwell Mission and you'll see that we are what others need to model after or they too will lose their "voters" in 25 years

Point #2 - "The willingness to embrace change always trying something new".

I feel like the Apostle of the obvious on this one. For anyone who has been coming to Caldwell in just the last few months has seen change. Just last Sunday was a great hymn sing that was wonderful. Gosh I love coming here because each day there is always something new. With this as a tenant we'll continue to grow and change, remain pliable and shape things beyond worship, such as mission, study topics and the use of our campus. Let us not fall into the 100 years of tradition unhampered by progress and change.

Point #3 - The extremely high level of volunteering

We are blessed with volunteers. We are a small church that supports over 70 ministries. We have over "600" points of volunteering. Unbelievable. At Caldwell if you ask for help you get it. This I feel shows a "total" commitment to our Caldwell mission.

Point #4 - The chemistry of Sunday worship

Don't you just love it? The trick going forward over the next 25 years is to keep it going. My bet is that it will.

Conclusion

In a recent article titled "Protestants not a majority in U.S." that was in The Charlotte Observer and written by Michael Gordon had some interesting information. Our Pastor had shared some of the information with us. Remember John telling us about the "nones", not "nuns" and the numbers continue to grow. We must not lose sight of this issue as the children of today continue to grow. Look at our congregation today. Who will be the leaders and members in 2037? You're right, it will be the 6 – 16 year old children of today. Caldwell is growing its education programs as we speak. Couple this with the

corner stone now in place, we'll be in great shape in 2037 and will be a model for the urban community. Hopefully in 2037 we will be able to call people by name and not category, i.e. black, white, gay, straight, rich poor etc.

I'll close with 3 questions.

Will you be part of the solution for Caldwell 2037?

Are you ready to fill these blank pages?

Are you with me?