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SERMON OUTLINE

Sunday May 6th, 2018

Pastor David Cooke - Growing Young

Executive Summary:

What you'll read below reflects the perspective of 103 people from your congregation (ranging in age from teenagers through age 70+) via the quantitative assessment, as interviews and focus group conversations with nearly 65 individuals spanning all ages. Overall I was struck by the unity and consistency of the feedback I heard.

The report that follows is divided into four main sections, each organized by a question: *What is going on? Why is this going on? What ought to be going on? How might we respond?*

Part One - Now: What is Going On?

Considering the context of the overall congregation, Cold Springs Church (CSC) has set an exciting and visionary new direction. The mission is: *"To raise up compassionate followers of Jesus Christ to be risk-takers for God."* The vision is: *"By 2028 Cold Springs Church will raise up 10,000 local, national and international leaders who live and lead out of the overflow of a Jesus-trusting life resulting in restored and strengthened families."*

Members of CSC describe the church as very healthy. Terms like servant oriented, home, unselfish, giving, and engaged were used regularly. There are many strengths on which to build, including an influx of young families over the past few years, senior adults who generally feel loved and cared for, a children's ministry that is "killing it" (in the words of a few people), a strong



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worship ministry, sticking to the basics/what is most important theologically, and being community/justice minded.

The vast majority of members I talked to described the core strength of the church as its overall family feel and strong relational dynamic.

Parents in particular expressed their satisfaction regarding the children's ministry and ministry for younger teenagers, but wanted a stronger focus on older teenagers and young adults. Current youth ministry attendance records demonstrate a drop off in attendance after freshman year of high school.

In terms of leadership, there is a lot of trust for David, Nick, and other staff. Several people commented that the staff is humble and that they lead with a strong sense of authenticity.

While it is clear David loves the church, he also has a clear sense that it can be or do more than it is presently.

Several people commented that the youth ministry is likely the healthiest it has been in the last 8-10 years. It has grown over the last number of years, and has moved from a combined midweek program (with middle and high school students together) to middle and high school students with their own offerings.

Part Two - Why: Why is this Going On?

My sense is that the health of both the overall congregation and the youth ministry largely flows from David and Nick's dedication and leadership. David and Nick's dedication to the church is a real gift, as it is not common for a full time pastor and youth pastor to work together for 9+ years. This has brought a strong sense of stability to both the church and the youth ministry.

An important question to consider as this work moves forward is what to do about the relative lack of older teenagers and young adults in the church.

Research from the Fuller Youth Institute (FYI) would suggest that the roots of the problem can be found in the way CSC approaches ministry beginning with those in high school, as well as the fact that many young people are not



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rejecting church's programs - they simply don't find the narrative of the church to be compelling.

Some evidence for this perspective can be found in the statement of one church leader who stated, "I'm not sure we are really drawing in kids who are far from God, we're drawing kids who like church - and we're doing it better than the church they were going to before." Along these lines, CSC's Growing Young Assessment scores indicate a lack of a thoughtful ministry approach to 20-somethings, struggles to involve young people in important decisions, challenges of adults to understand young people's perspectives, and lack of a sufficient number of adults who invest in or minister to young people. All of these factors point to the possibility that CSC offers solid programmatic youth ministry for teenagers interested in God or church, but that it may fall short in offering something compelling or challenging enough to raise up mature and lasting disciples of Jesus Christ who view CSC as their long term home.

Research and experience also indicates that similar churches excel in helping young people take initial steps in their faith, but are perhaps not as effective at developing mature Christian disciples. They are also not as adept at responding to the complexities of many young people's life today, as needs are responded to through programs (as opposed to invested relationships).

Part Three - New: What Ought to be Going On?

I do not have the sense that Cold Springs Church has to completely reinvent itself or head in some very different direction.

When I consider where God might be leading CSC, my sense is that the direction (outlined in CSC's new guiding documents) will be maximized by leaning even further in to those things that make the church great.

I asked the young people what it's like to be a teenager today. Middle school students said you have to deal with popularity, drugs, sex, cheating in school, and pornography. They said it's hard to navigate, and wondered if the church could train them in how to respond. They expressed that they're trying to be Christian, but they're also trying to fit in. They're not sure when to take a stand.



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The middle school students went on to say they don't tell their parents about any of this, generally. They also expressed that it's hard that people think low of them, but that they're capable. They wanted people (including those in the church) to have higher expectations of them.

When I asked high school students the same question, they said, "A lot of adults don't really understand how much we're going through. It's different." They talked about stress and anxiety as defining aspects of their lives. There's such a strong focus on social media, your image, popularity, and competition. One simply described it as, "hard." Thankfully, they said they can open up about it to many of their small group leaders.

I also asked the high school students, "What's a hard truth our church needs to hear about you or your generation?" Here are their answers:

- "We're not perfect"
- "The things you did that you don't talk about, we're doing them."
- "Remember when you were in high school."
- "Be more open, not so standoffish."
- "Be more frank, more honest."
- "Sometimes they think we're not that smart, that we make dumb choices (which we do sometimes), but we don't always."

I then asked both groups what they wish the church did/provided more for them. Here are their answers for middle school:

- It would be nice to have more advice on how to deal with drug use at school. There's a lot of use. Church doesn't talk about this at all.
- How to deal with everything that goes on at school. How to deal with the 21st century. How to figure out which group to be with.
- How to learn to be yourself. Not just how to deal with things.
- As 8th graders, how to go into high school.
- We want adults to interact with us. They sit in the back. It's awkward.



Part Four - How: How Might we Respond?

As mentioned above, I think that CSC is currently in a healthy place in its ministry with young people, but there is a lot of room to grow.

Recommendation #1: Align CSC's vision for teenagers and young adults with the church's new overall vision.

Recommendation #2: Create a thoughtful and comprehensive answer to the question, "What does a young person at CSC need to grow as a mature disciple/leader, and to be launched post-high school with a vibrant Christian faith?"

Recommendation #3: The natural result of #1 and #2 above will be a re-written job description for the youth ministry position, likely as something more focused on family ministry.

Conclusion - Next Steps:

This report is not meant to be an end to the discussion, but the beginning of a process designed to respond to the opportunities and challenges identified.

Jake Mulder - Fuller Youth Institute



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We connect in Life Groups to:

- Connect with God and each other
- Connect the Bible to life
- Connect with the community through serving together

ICE BREAKER In thinking back over your life, what was your favorite age? What was your most challenging? What prompted your choices?

PRAYER Our desire is that you give 10% of your time to God in prayer. Before your sermon discussion, take time to pray together.

THIS WEEK: “Growing Young”

This week Pastor David brought us a message on “Growing Young.” This paradigm aligns well with our vision (where we are going) of: ***By 2028 Cold Springs Church will raise up 10,000 local, national and international leaders who live and lead out of the overflow of a Jesus-trusting life resulting in restored and strengthened families.***

1. Looking back at your notes from this week’s message, what particularly caught your attention, encouraged, challenged or confused you?
2. What makes the above response important to you?
3. What helped you see more of Jesus and his cross, or moved you to love him more?

TAKING IT HOME

On our website (www.coldspringschurch.net) under “SERMONS,” you will find a link to the results of ***Cold Springs Church’s Growing Young Assessment*** from earlier this year. There are also hard copies at the Welcome Center in our lobby. Please take a look at this report and discuss the below.

If you have been around Cold Springs for a while, you will have gleaned that we are passionate about impacting families... you may have heard us say, “We are a church for the next generation.” We believe that we can be a Jesus-centered community that young people increasingly discover and love, that we can do so without buying into the hype or leaving older generations behind.

There are **six core commitments** measured in the Growing Young Assessment. We believe these are essential areas in which to invest our time and energy. Below are the reported findings.

- **Keychain Leadership:** Indicates we do well empowering young people.
 - **Empathy Today:** Indicates we may need to improve at moving beyond judging and criticizing and instead stepping into the shoes of this generation.
 - **Jesus' Message:** Our church received a high score, which indicates we are doing well welcoming young people into a Jesus-centered way of life.
 - **Warm Relationships:** Our church received a high score, which indicates we are doing well creating an environment that is welcoming, accepting, authentic, hospitable, and caring.
 - **Prioritize Everywhere:** Our church received a high score, which indicates we are doing well in our tangible, systemic commitment to allocate resources and attention to young people across the life of our congregation.
 - **Best Neighbors:** Our church received a high score, which indicates we do well going beyond condemning the world outside our walls and enabling young people to neighbor well locally and globally.
4. In which of the above areas do you think we are doing well?
 - 4a. How so?
 5. In which of the above areas do you think we need improvement?
 - 5a. How so?
 6. Taking all that you have considered this week, what is the one important thing for you to remember and put into action?

ON MISSION

A huge Cold Springs “**Thank You!**” goes out to the **300+** people who participated in our **#FORELDOCO** launch on Sunday, April 29th at our Day of Service! We served a dozen homes and 6 local schools.

Stay tuned for monthly updates and special spot-lighting on social media. If you haven't yet, “like” us on **Facebook** and “follow” us on **Instagram**.

7. Take some time as a group to share your experiences from the Day of Service.



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