

A Dozen or More Important Learnings about Rural Church Life

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1. There are two basic ecclesiologies

*Western European Heritage.

Parish. Pastoral Care. Salvation is in and through the church. For Christendom.

Colony. Mainlines and Roman Catholics

*Made in America.

Salvation comes through an encounter with God. Product of the Great Awakenings.

Gathered. Evangelical. Conquest.

2. Older Rural Churches become “Family Chapels”

*Kinship connections

*Operational style

3. The core folk in a rural church love it deeply. But this can be excessive and become a threat.

4. Satan still stirs.

5. Prayer Changes Things.

World War II plaque. The “name it, claim it” folk caused me to react. But I have come back to realize what a difference prayer does make. In me. In the situation. In the results.

Prayer care is at the center of rural ministry as I practice and experience it.

6. God is faithful, and full of surprises.

Again and again He has demonstrated His Greatness and Goodness with miracles that I could not have imagined.

7. Context is very important. But it is not determinative.

8. Monopoly is seldom, if ever, a good thing.

No one church can do it all by itself. Healthy competition is desirable.

The two pig theory of church growth. Any farmer knows that by putting two pigs in a pen both will grow more than if each was in its own pen.

9. The church has both a human and a divine nature.

Humanly it functions in terms of the principles of social organizations. Goals. Adaptation. Integration of the Parts. And Boundary Maintenance.

But it also has the divine power of being the body and bride of Jesus and the family, nation, temple and army of God.

10. The church must address both basic tasks—worship, evangelism, nurture, fellowship, ministry and mission—but it must also be concerned with relationships. To focus on one side or the other may damage or destroy the church. Context and the work of the Holy Spirit may dictate a focus on one task or the other, but never exclusively.

11. Church Growth must be at the core and by adding cells.

12. Be missional. Locally and globally. This is a key to health.

13. Don Quixote is not the role model of choice.

Pick the windmills with which to joust very strategically.

God hits some good licks with weak and crooked sticks.

What would you add?