

More On The Transition

While visiting a relatively large congregation a few weeks ago, an announcement was made before the Sunday morning worship service that one of the elders would present the lesson. As the elder began his sermon he explained that he was substituting because their minister had been dismissed. (I later learned the dismissal was for “misconduct”.) During the congregation’s transition, their eldership was most concerned there would be murmurings and misinformation circulating, the members would lose focus on the work and activities of the congregation, and eventually divisions would occur. All of these things are very harmful to the Lord’s body or any other organization. His message is applicable for any congregation going through a significant change.

The spiritual maturity of the congregation is quickly demonstrated during significant transitions such as the minister leaving, the resignation of an elder(s), or a large group of members leaving the congregation. As simple as it sounds, the necessary ingredient for a congregation to successfully go through a major transition is that the members collectively love God enough to cause them to love and trust one another. As long as the members of the Lord’s church are faithful, the church will not be threatened from outside forces during a transition. From the beginning, God protected His people as long as they remain faithful. Scripture teaches that any potential threat comes from within the body (Act 20:29, 30; Rom. 16:17, 18). As long as the members continue to “walk worthy of the calling which they were called”, there should not be any reason for concern during a transition (Eph. 4: 1-3).

Of course, the eldership must accomplish their God-given role: to lead the congregation. They must be united in purpose and in execution of the transition plans for the congregation. An eldership can agree on purpose and goals and be divided on how to achieve them. Simply stated, a united front is absolutely essential.

Why write an article during this time in the Karns congregation? Because it gives us as elders the opportunity to commend the Karns members for the exemplary manner in which you have handled the changes you have been through and continue to experience. We have not observed any of the things the elder above was trying to avoid in that congregation. You have remained focused on the work and activities of the congregation without murmuring or complaining. The conclusion is the Karns congregation loves the Lord enough to cause you to love one another. We sincerely admire you for your faithfulness.

For the elders,
Don Denton