



## Notes during the Migration: Mutual Respect

By Ted Hartman

One of the great blessings of being involved with “Transforming for Mission” consultations is that we get to be around a lot of God’s people and get an opportunity to listen to them. We listen to God’s people of multiple generations during the interviewing process, during the focus group sharing, and during the leadership dialogue. It is a rich and enlivening environment.

My observation is that we, as a church body in the California-Nevada-Hawaii District, are learning to respect each other greatly as we migrate under the leadership of the Spirit of God from a church world to a post-church world. We take with us the same Gospel, the same scripture, the same faith connection, and the same genuine community of faith that we have always experienced. But we move now into a world that sees us as irrelevant, hypocritical, self-righteous, and judgmental. We can argue all we want about the accuracy of their perception, but that seems to be their perception and “perception is reality.”

In the midst of this migration into a new world of perception, we have experienced remarkable unity and respect between generations of God’s people. These are people with different vantage points of the cultural changes. Some are far away because they were around long before the Post-Church phenomenon became a reality. Others are closer because they have watched it unfold as they grew up. However, they all share the same faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and a confident hope of eternal life.

Let me give you an example of this mutual respect. In one of our focus groups a man of 80 plus years talked about how at this stage of his life he likes things predictable. “I like my newspaper waiting for me in the same place every morning.” He likes “church things” the way they have always been. But, he also recognizes that some things have to change in order to relate to the new times with the good news of Jesus Christ. His statement of mutual respect is “I don’t need to change, but I won’t stand in the way of what needs to change.” What spiritual maturity! He recognizes his own preferences, but gives of himself to open doors of change because it is the best for all in the Kingdom.

The story doesn’t end there. Over the next few minutes, the younger members of the focus group responded. They celebrated him and his position of spiritual maturity and in a number of different ways said this: “We love and respect you; and we won’t leave you behind.” What a combination: “We will not stand in the way...We need to move on but we will not leave you behind!” That is mutual respect. That is the Kingdom of God in migration.

“WE WILL NOT STAND IN THE WAY...

WE NEED TO MOVE ON, BUT WE WILL NOT LEAVE YOU BEHIND!”

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Ted Hartman works with congregations and schools in the California-Nevada-Hawaii District to reorient and redirect their ministries in order to connect with their local community. He also coordinates the revitalization process for congregations who want to begin a new life cycle of ministry and is a certified mission coach. You may contact Ted at [ted@cnh-lcms.org](mailto:ted@cnh-lcms.org)

## Questions for Reflection

1. How has your church faced the shift from a "churched-world to a post-churched world?"
2. Who in your church are the culture watchers that help the body of Christ that is your church understand the changing culture?
3. Is your church moving forward? How do you know?
4. What will you do to help your church understand the shift in cultural attitudes toward the church?
5. What will you do to foster conversations of mutual respect?
6. What steps is your church taking to ensure that no one will be left behind?

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