

Summary – Jack Davis – What is required of a downtown congregation.

Acts 2:42-47 describes the New Testament Church as those who received the Word, were baptized and added to the church. “And they devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” The apostles did many wonders and signs. The people shared all that they had and helped those in need. They came together to eat and praised God and the Lord added to their number day by day those who being saved.

The 5 historic downtown churches: First Presbyterian, First Baptist, Church St. United Methodist, Immaculate Conception RC, and St. John’s Cathedral. These churches are similar in that they have ministered downtown for more than a century. Each decided to remain downtown and repaired and increased their buildings. They have been involved in starting new churches. Staff members are gifted in ministry. Music tends toward the traditional although there are innovations and moderate updates. The downtown churches have a larger number of professional and well-educated persons although they have a number of older persons and others who have financial and emotional needs. The churches are challenged to meet current budgets although they have reserves and foundation funds that may be used in special circumstances. The downtown churches are open to ways they may update and be more effective in a changing society that is less congenial to the traditional churches.

Home Missions Churches: I worked in a Greensboro, North Carolina Home Missions Church 1960-69. The local mother Presbyterian Churches provided 64 founding members who rented a school auditorium for worship. The Presbyterian Church, US provided professional guidance from city planners and Christian educators who helped the local churches develop multi-use buildings that could be used for nursery and kindergartens and well as worship and fellowship. The denomination was strong and committed to church growth.

Pastors were expected to visit and welcome new persons moving into housing areas. The church building was used for Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Brownie Scouts, Jr. Girl Scouts, and Cadette Scouts. Pee Wee athletic teams were sponsored by the church. The church membership grew from 64 to 324 due to the active programming of the church.

Pastors planned to make home visits to all church families. Members were trained to be Under-Shepherds and had gatherings of their flock. Successful Home Mission churches were in growing areas at a time when people considered church an important part of their life.

Downtown Church: Jack worked as an Associate in Knoxville 1st Presbyterian. I was called to develop group ministries that were in the vogue in 1970’s. The groups were based on the idea of Acts 2:42 as mentioned above. We had depth sharing groups, parent and marriage training and developed new Sunday School Classes.

There was an established program to follow up those who visited the church. Preparation for the 1970 The Billy Graham Crusade gave us new skills for outreach.

Community Church: I worked 19 years in Fountain City Presbyterian. We did the usual things that were expected: Biblical preaching and teaching, pastoral follow up of all members, and development of Under-Shepherds who looked after their “flock”. We were able to grow as we expanded our full time staff from 2 to 6 persons. Later we started a Child Development Center in our new Education Building. The Center now 7 staff members and 70 children.

Overall: Church growth occurred by the grace of God who inspired many people to share their love, talents and life.