



News and Current Events :: The Purpose Driven Synagogue?

The Purpose Driven Synagogue? - posted by PreachParsly (), on: 2005/10/13 14:30

[Image: https://www.sermonindex.net/images/forum/2004/may/featured_news.gif]

Some Jewish synagogues are taking their lead from a mover behind the Protestant phenomena of mega-churches.

According to Synagogue 3000, an umbrella organization pushing for synagogue transformation, there was a pathbreaking meeting with Rick Warren ("The Purpose-Driven Life"), founding pastor of Saddleback Church—an evangelical Christian church that average over 30,000 worshippers each weekend—to explore what synagogues can learn from mega-churches and small groups.

With a new model in place, Synagogue 3000 says that "thousands of Jewish worshippers around the country are being drawn to (the organization's) new concept of lively, creative and spiritually welcoming communities." The organization says the success of its venture defies the notion that there is a decreased demand for synagogues, and claims that Synagogue 3000 congregations are growing, not shrinking.

Synagogue 3000 says that for years "many Jews spent the Jewish High Holidays (Yamim No'raim - days of awe) bored, counting pages and looking at the clock." To change that habit, Synagogue 3000 says it seeks to engage worshippers "to be center stage active players instead of disengaged spectators." According to the Judaism 101 website, Rosh Hashana occurs on the first and second days of Tishri, or the seventh month of the Jewish year, and "is commonly known as the Jewish New Year." This year, the Jewish New Year began Monday, Oct. 3 at sundown.

Synagogue 3000 says its objective is to encourage Jews to recommit to Jewish tradition and "synagogue life by creating new 21st century spiritual arenas where relationships with God and with each other define everything the synagogue does."

Synagogue 3000 was developed by Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman of Hebrew Union College and Dr. Ron Wolfson of University of Judaism, and includes 18 clergy and artists working in synagogues from New York to Los Angeles. A major gift from the Marcus Foundation, led by Home Depot's Bernie Marcus, Synagogue 3000 will lead a nationwide effort to bring a more dynamic and effective environment to Jewish congregational life, the organization said.

Synagogue 3000 says its congregations are changing the conversation about meaningful Jewish life in our time by using "traditional teachings along with theater, music, dance, exuberant singing, yoga, meditation, community activism and other creative methods to engage individuals in spiritual pursuits and active community life." To prove its point, Synagogue 3000 cites a few examples of what it says illustrates an integration of "traditional beliefs with personally meaningful practices," while increasing the number of worshippers:

- In New York a Jewish ritual theater that included a DJ, turntables and traditional instruments at the Actors Temple hosted by Artistic Director Amichai Lau-Lavie;

- In Los Angeles a young female rabbi attracting crowds of "next generation hipsters to Yom Kippur yoga and disco break-fast (Ikar, Mid-Wilshire, Los Angeles);

- Performer Craig Taubman leads a band for Rosh Ha Shanah service (Sinai Temple) and conducts innovative healing service on Yom Kippur;

- To a Yom Kippur creative dance celebration themed after Daniel Pearl's "I am Jewish" statement and new underwear drive for the homeless at Temple Micah, in Washington DC.

The organization's activities are also being pitched as helping to offset problems related to heightened security.

"The High Holy Days bring a special dilemma to American congregations. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur attract more Jews to synagogue—and more attention to American Jews in general—than at any other time of year. The very prominence of this intensive Jewish season raises significant security concerns for clergy and lay leaders responsible for the safety of their members and guests," said Ron Wolfson, President, and Shawn Landres, Director of Research at Syn

agogue 3000 in a joint statement. “But at a time when virtually all the synagogues in North America have had to install some level of security screening at their front doors, is this welcoming vision realistic, let alone responsible? We believe that the creation of a welcoming ambience is not only responsible.”

Elsewhere in their statement, Wolfson and Landres advise that “a synagogue whose members care enough to greet one another is a synagogue whose members are its first and most important line of defense against the unusual, the people or vehicles that don’t look quite right, the potential threat. Savvy synagogue leaders have turned this obstacle into an opportunity. The best congregations have trained their security personnel in the art of greeting. You don’t have to be fluent in Hebrew or even be Jewish to say, “Shanah tovah.” Others deploy volunteers to mitigate delays and other inconveniences caused by security checks.”

Re: The Purpose Driven Synagogue? - posted by groh_frog, on: 2005/10/25 6:36

As I read this article, I started chuckling at the idea that a group would need to come up with a campaign to keep its members involved, but realized, that that's a popular outlook, even among our Churches in the US.

Recently I was talking to a pastor in Anchorage, AK. He was very proud of the fact that his church is getting ready to expand and add another 10 or so rows of pews to their sanctuary. Well, when you look at their Sunday morning service, the most packed service of the day, you would know that they barely need it. At most the sanctuary might be two-thirds full. So why is this needed. "Well, when you have a cramped sanctuary, people are less likely to feel comfortable and come back. When there's room to spare, it's more comfortable, and therefore more people will come."

It's a funny circular reasoning, but it's sad at the same time. Do we have to build fancy, roomy churches to attract Christians?

I don't believe God changes, and I don't believe that we need to change God. Culture may change, but the truth does not. How is it that we, too, think we have to change, or earn believers?

It's about God! To that pastor, I would say that if he is serving God in his church, God will take care of the rest.

Grace and Peace...

Re: The Purpose Driven Synagogue? - posted by ZekeO (), on: 2005/10/25 6:39

This also amused me. Next thing they would be wanting to celebrate their shabbat meals by getting them from a take away. :-D

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2005/10/25 7:09

What's next---Purpose Driven Mosques and seeker-sensitive sleeper cells? :-P

Re: What's the big attraction? - posted by roadsign (), on: 2005/10/25 7:25

It breaks my heart to see that the biggest attraction that catches the eyes of outsiders is not Christ, but man's accomplishments.

This article should cause the PDC folk to weep, not rejoice, for it is symptomatic of a missed mark. The real PURPOSE of the Church got missed - to draw others to CHRIST. Instead it drew others to man - and reinforced the religious institutions.

What a shame!!!!

Should we be proud that we inadvertently promoted this kind of Babel tower thinking?

Diane

What's that quote? - posted by groh_frog, on: 2005/10/26 9:19

What's that quote? In "Ten shekels and a shirt" by Paris Reidhead, he quotes a Chinese missionary (to the US). When asked what impressed him the most about America, he said, "the amazing things they can do without God" (in reference to the Church). I don't remember it exactly, but it's sobering.

There's also a whole string about Rick Warren's beliefs to look at.

Grace and Peace...

Re: The Purpose Driven Synagogue? - posted by Nellie, on: 2005/10/26 9:35

God will not give His Glory to anyone.
We need to uplift the Lord Jesus Christ.
He is the only One that matters.
Not big buildings, books, or anything, can ever take His place.
He is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.
God Bless
Nellie

Re: The Purpose Driven Synagogue? - posted by Warrior4Jah (), on: 2005/11/29 16:01

How could Rick Warren help with this or support this? And how does yoga get yourself closer to God?

What actually happens to Jewish people who don't turn to the Lord?