

## Jim's Tool Box

### What If...We Rethink Church?



Recently pastors in the West Ohio Annual Conference received a “Rethink Church” DVD (see picture at left). These were distributed at the clergy session or mailed to pastors. The DVD contains a video about the strategy behind the Rethink Church campaign.

This campaign is a new phase in an effort both to **reach out to persons in our communities and across the nation whom we are not now reaching (primarily 18-34 year olds)**. The campaign also seeks to **engage and train congregations in their efforts to invite and welcome persons to their congregations**.

The campaign was launched with media blitz this spring. Perhaps you saw some of the commercials on cable TV or ads in national magazines for this campaign. The public “portal” for the effort to reach those we are not now reaching with the gospel is the website [10thousanddoors.org](http://10thousanddoors.org). This site is designed to appeal especially to media and web savvy youth and young adults.

**You and your church have a role to play in the effectiveness of this site.** *It is very important that someone from your congregation go on to the “Find a Church” website to update the information about your congregation. Every UM church can be found on this site. If the site for your church has not been updated by someone from the congregation, then it will contain only generic and basic information. Please update this site so that it contains as much specific information about ministry, outreach, small group, and learning settings that your church offers. Go to the [Find a Church](http://Find a Church) website and update your congregation’s profile. There is a “Find” section on the 10thousand doors web page that invites seekers to put their address/zip code and to indicate their interests. Then the website delivers results of nearby congregations based on how much the congregation has ministries and activities that are of interest to the seeker.*

Rethink Church is designed to help us in the church to think about church in different ways. It takes the idea of the slogan we have used in the last four years, “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” and instead of using “Open” as an adjective to use “Open” as a verb. What are the implications for your church if you understand “open” in that way?

The publicity material around this campaign puts it this way:

*“If you choose, you can leverage ‘Rethink Church’ as a catalyst to increase your numbers and vitalize your congregation. Challenge: We know from research that 100 million young adults identify themselves as ‘spiritual’ but see no role for church in their lives. They believe churches are indifferent or oblivious to the needs of the community. ‘Rethink Church’ presents congregations with a challenge. It calls us to reclaim our Wesleyan DNA, get out of our comfort zones and go into our communities to make good things happen as our expression of love for Christ.”*

Congregations across the West Ohio Conference (and East Ohio) will have the opportunity to participate in a workshop in sharpening their welcoming skills. The training event is scheduled for Saturday, August 15, from 9:00 to 3:00 pm, and it will be held at the Grove City UMC. The Rethink Church Welcome Training offers three ways to help your congregation become more actively engaged with spiritual seekers in your community: **Welcome. Connect. Identify.** Congregations are encouraged to send at

*least three persons* to the event so that at least one person can sit in on one of the three tracks (Welcome, Connect, and Identify). Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the training or to register. An information event for the brochure can be downloaded [HERE](#).

Now is the time to rethink what it means to be the church in the early part of the twenty-first century. We cannot afford to have business as usual. Now is the time to discern how God is calling you and your congregation for service and ministry and how you can reach out to new generations and new groups of persons in your neighborhood and community in these days.

If I can be of any help to you and/or your congregation as you consider your mission in these days, feel free to contact me at the district office. I am available to lead dialogue on these topics or to consult with your church as you “rethink” what it means for you to be the church in these days. Contact me at the district office ([jwaugh@wocumc.org](mailto:jwaugh@wocumc.org)).