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When a guest visits your church, attempts to connect with your church, checks out your church online or asks a member of your church what's it all about, what do they say, what do they see, what do they read and what do they hear?

I think few people today are interested in joining a church due to the building, no matter how attractive or spacious. I also think few people are interested in partnering with a church because of its name or denominational affiliation. I am not even sure they want to join so they can get fed or blessed. I think they are looking for more.

I think they are looking for a narrative, a story they can become part of, a story that helps them connect with Jesus, with the people in the church and in the community in which the church is.

I often visit churches that have a great narrative, a story of who they are, what they are becoming and where they are going as a community. The members may or may not know the narrative, but the guests usually will not have a clue upon visiting the church. Where are we going together? What is the mission we share? How do we understand ourselves? What is God doing in and through us? If I connect with this faith community, exactly what is the appealing story I will have the privilege of becoming a part of, and who will my partners be in this growing-in-faith business?

Anyone looking to discover more about a church should easily be able to find the narrative on the website, on social media, in the bulletin of the service they attend, in the pastor's message, the pictures placed around the campus and throughout the worship service. This should be told, seen and celebrated often.

What is the story of this faith community, and do I want to be a part of it?

The story or narrative of this community can include:

- Our young families connecting with each other in a way that supports how we follow Christ together, raise our children in a loving faith, serve and impact our community and change the world in which we live.
- Becoming multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, learning to understand and love each other that it is reflected in a way that transforms and shapes the community we are in and the vital meaningful life in Christ in which we are growing together.
- Growing to know Christ in such a way that we are transformed and then transforming our community. Our story is children, families, seniors, singles, students, rich, poor, brand-new followers of Jesus and those who have followed for decades and every category of our community.
- I am not speaking necessarily of writing out a new-style mission or vision statement in this way but encouraging us to envelop our church and our guests with an exciting, encouraging and attractive narrative. People will unite with the narrative but not if they don't know it.

If we don't have a narrative people can or want to connect with (most churches do, but a few have misplaced it), then a church can do envisioning work and develop a new narrative that can carry them into the future. The Book of Acts is a good place to begin in researching the story of a growing church.

Tell people your story, both your members and guests want to know, and even more, most want to be a part of that story as it continues to unfold!