

Section 6

Introducing “Stop, Look, and Listen” to Your Church

In a congregation

I recommend that you start with a small group. In this group of six to eight, invite a cross-section of your congregation: leaders, the spiritually mature, and newcomers. You will learn together as you share the six “lessons.” No one has to be the expert. As you learn to recognize God individually and in the group, you may also discern where God is already working in the congregation. You can plan together where and how to introduce this to the congregation.

Or, you may look at where God is already at work, where doors are open, and start there. Some start with a class on Sunday or during the week. Others begin with preaching.

Leadership groups

Ask for the leaders in the small learning group to help you plan where and how to introduce this to the leadership. Most leadership groups are most open in retreats. Ask where they have recognized the Spirit, energy, community, God working. Then ask where they experience God now. You may use the book, “Changing Congregational Culture,” by Anthony Robinson.

In introducing this attitude to regular meetings, you may begin with shifting the “business as usual” approach. Here are a number of possibilities. Ask the group to check in; each takes the opportunity to tell the others where they find themselves. You can explain that this will help the work go faster and help them know each other better. You may begin with a Bible reflection, asking where they hear God speaking to them, and then as a group and congregation, and in the world. You may have a moment of silence for a few minutes before you vote, asking the leaders to pray that they might do God’s desire. You might ask where they noticed the Spirit, the energy, in the service last Sunday. These practices will begin to affect the culture of the congregation as leaders begin to practice this attitude elsewhere.

There is a new approach to creative change in groups called “Theory U.” It is written in business language, but similar to the patterns in scripture of surrender and grace. It is remarkably like “Stop, Look, and Listen.” An executive summary is available free on the web: www.theoryu.com.

Worship

Ask the small group you learned with to meet with the worship committee to help decide how to help worshippers recognize God for themselves. There are many ways to preach about this, and to give people an exercise to do throughout the week. You may leave some periods of silence in the

prayers so that people might look and listen. Some congregations have invited parishioners to share a short story about how they recognize God.

Education

The material described above can be used even with the most formal lecture/discussion class. When individuals in the class are resistant to talk about their experience, you can ask several brave class members to share their experience with the practices.

The material has been easily adapted to mid-week classes. Teach, do the practice, invite individuals to reflect by themselves, and then ask them to share. Get some feedback about how things went.

Mission

It may be quite easy to invite the members of an outreach committee to be quiet and ask for God's guidance for them and for discerning where God is calling, already at work, in the community and the world. This is a great addition to material used for developing the missional congregation such as *We Are Here Now* by Patrick Keifert. You may even listen to and with the outsiders, rather than only doing what you want to for them.

Peter Senge's new book, *The Necessary Revolution*, elegantly teaches patterns for doing this. These patterns are quite similar to "Stop, Look, and Listen."

These are just hints of what has been done in churches already. People have recognized God, paid attention, awakened, changed. God may have other ideas to teach you.

Stop. Look. Listen.

God is asking, sharing, waiting to be invited in.