



KNU International English Church

A LOVING COMMUNITY THAT CHANGES OUR WORLD.

October 16, 2010

Josh Broward

Making SPACE for God's NEXT

(2010-2011 Annual Review)

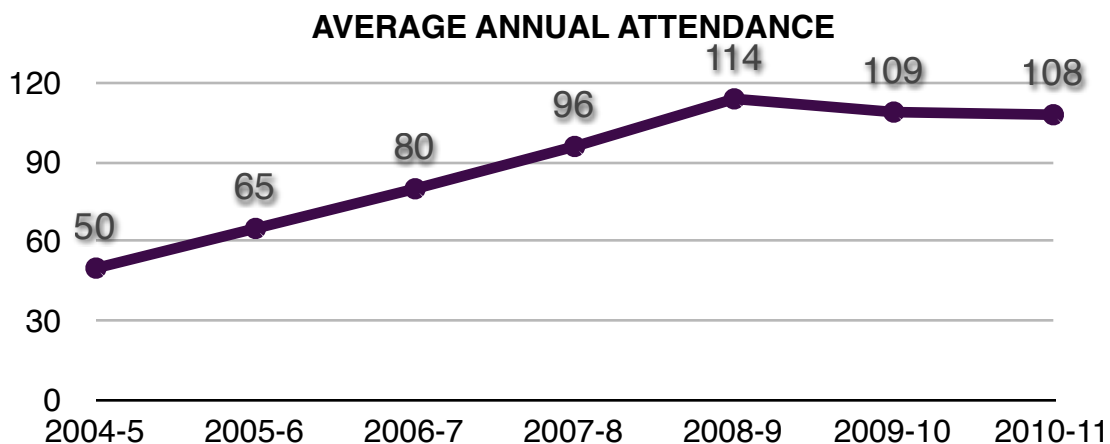
Exodus 40:34-38

[1] Once a year, we spend one day talking about our life as a church - where we've been and where we're going as a church. Today is that day. If you're new with us, consider this a brief look into what's going on here. You'll see that good things are happening. If you're not new, walk with me as we try to understand our history, our present, and where God is leading us for our future.

[2] As I've been thinking about this year for our church, I've also been thinking of a story from my Texas history class. The key story of Texas history is their struggle for independence from Mexico. Here's a 30 second summary. Texans rebelled against Mexico and had some early victories in 1835. Yeehaw! Mexico responded with a well-trained army under the ruthless General Santa Anna. The small, unorganized Texas army started - as we say in Texas - gettin' whooped (beaten). Under General Sam Houston, the Texas army retreated, recruited, and trained ... retreated, recruited, and trained. They were building strength and waiting for the right time. Finally, in 1836, the Texans attacked, captured Santa Anna, and won the war.

On the surface, it looked like they were moving backward and getting weaker. But they weren't. They were getting stronger and preparing to move forward from a position of strength. They were preparing for victory.

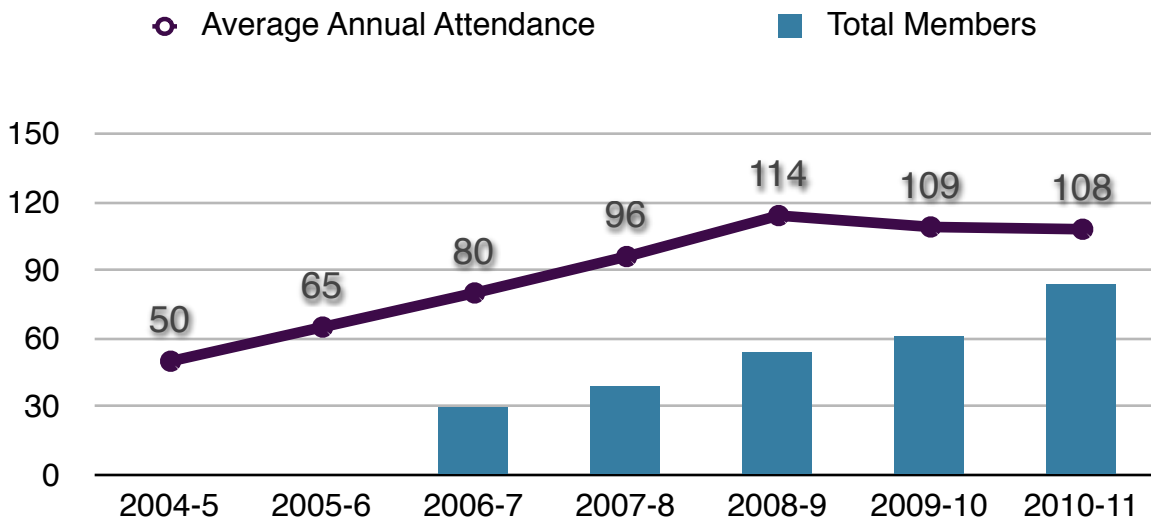
Our story as a church has a few similarities with the retreating Texas army. We haven't had any massacres, but we have had some conflicts and some losses. [3] We often lose members just because people move, but in 2009 and 2010 more than 30% of our members moved away, many of them key leaders. Our attendance hit a plateau.



After several years of major growth, transitioning to a new size, we've had just over 100 people in our worship services for the past three years. One thing that's not reflected by these numbers is that we hit an all time high of 162 people for our baptism service. When everybody shows up at the same time, we've got a lot of people.

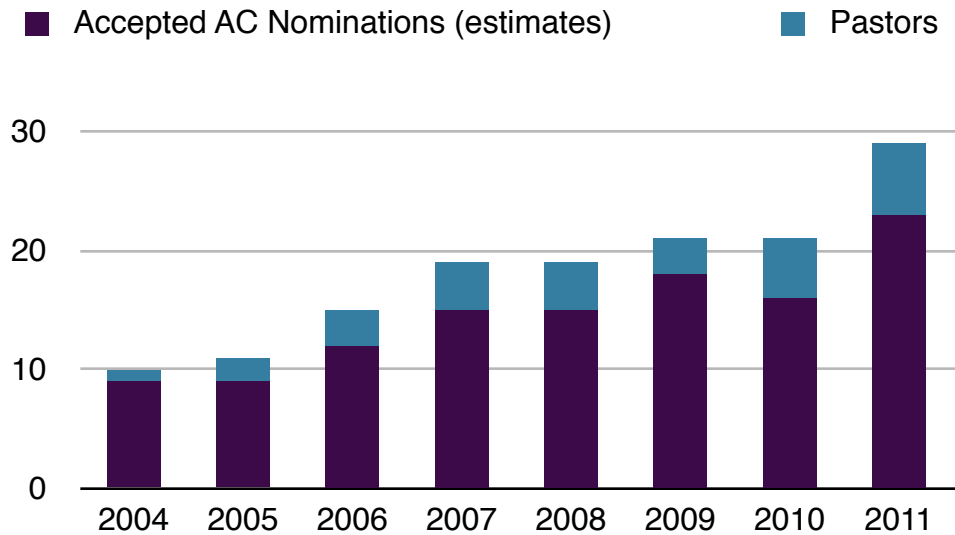
I've spent time this year wondering what's happening with this. Is there a problem? Are there multiple problems? Should we even be all that concerned with how many people are in this red chairs? If we replace our losses as people move away, is that an acceptable form of "growth"? Is there a limit to how big an international English speaking church can be in Cheonan? What size should we be? What size does God want us to be? To be very honest with you, I'm not quite sure how to answer these questions. However, I do know how to answer some other questions.

[4] Do we have more active members?



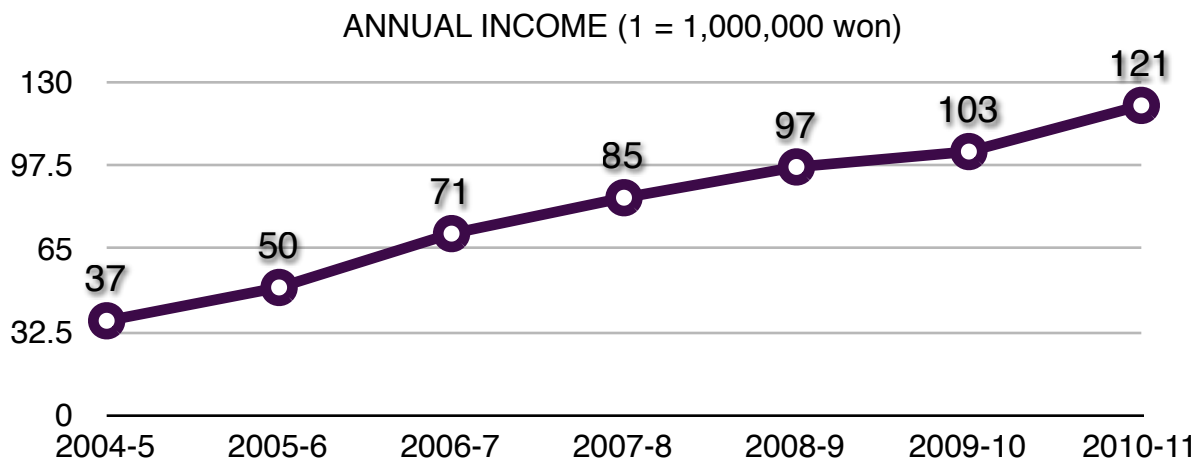
Today 24 people are joining our church. Even though, part of our church life is people moving away, more and more people are becoming members. For most of our history, about half of the people in these red chairs on Sunday were basically spectators. Now, about 80% of us are committed to our mission and participating in our vision.

[5] OK, so we have more members, but **do we actually have more commitment and involvement?** One key sign of involvement is whether people are willing to give their time and energy to the leadership of the church. We've often had a really hard time finding enough people to serve on the Advisory Council. We've usually had some or all of the votes as simple YES/NO votes because only one person was running for each available position. Sometimes, we've even had unfilled positions. That is definitely not the case this year. We have way more people than positions. If you consider total number of people accepting nominations to the Advisory Council and total number of pastors, you'll see that our church's leadership team has grown significantly this year.



More and more of you are ready to step up and lead. That is a very, very positive sign of our health as a church.

[6] Another good sign of increasing commitment is giving. So we need to ask another question: **Has our giving been increasing?**



This is also a good sign, and it's not just about the money. Our increased giving means increased commitment to our mission and increased trust that our church will invest in the mission.

Some other important signs of health cannot be charted with graphs. A very important question is: **Are we accomplishing our mission to be a loving community that changes our world? Are we living our vision?**

[7] *People are being renewed by God's Love!*

- Remember our 9 baptisms. InTae said: "Through the Youth group, I learned many things about Jesus and realized that Jesus is my Redeemer." Claire said: "I have started to realize I am loved and forgiven everything through the perfection of Christ's

finished work. I am baptized today, because I have been made new through His love for me and because I know that Christ Jesus is my only hope and the one thing that is needful. I give myself and my life to Him.”

- We did two more weeks of 24/7 Prayer which pumped God’s Spirit into our church and reconnected us with God’s passions.
- We had a few miracles of healing - physical and spiritual.
- Greenhouse Worship continues to help us engage God in creative and meaningful ways.

[8] *We are being a multicultural community!*

- We started a newsletter to help us know more about each other and to stay more connected with each other.
- As a multicultural community, we’ve been reaching out to our KNU students more.
- We’ve had a few points of conflict, but we’ve addressed that conflict in very healthy and helpful ways. And we’ve become stronger and wiser because of it.
- We developed a new website and logo, and new people continue to find our church through the internet every month. This website has the tools for a password protected online church directory, and we’ll be working on implementing that this year as a tool to help us develop our internal relationships.
- We’ve shown lots of support to each other during baby showers and weddings. And who can forget Calvin’s testimony that he came to our church unemployed, single, and childless, and now he’s got a job, a wife, and a son! And then, he prematurely proclaimed Matt’s engagement - despite my objections - “No I talked to him today!”
- On a personal level, I’d like to say thank you for helping our family move to a house that will help us settle down and feel comfortable for a long time.
- I’d also like to say thank you to my Graybeards. This is a multicultural group of older men here who are meeting me on Friday mornings or Sunday afternoons to share their wisdom and to support me in prayer. Thank you guys. You make me better.

[9] *We are causing global change through local action!*

- 2 widows and 10 orphans in Bangladesh have new homes because of our support. We also hosted Hermann (South Asia Field Director) and Nathan (Bangladesh National Director) here and helped them make connections with other Nazarene churches. We’ll start sponsoring kids this fall, and we’ll send another team in the winter.
- Our relationship with KNU is getting quietly stronger. We continue to have lots of international teachers from KNU, and we now have 10 Korean faculty and staff. Also, we’ve written several articles explaining what KNU is doing to the wider Nazarene world.
- We spent a lot of time considering how we can best serve our community, and we shifted our focus from the kimbap ministry to Cheonan’s multicultural community. This year, we’ll continue thinking about how to do this in the best possible ways.

Yes, we are living our mission. Yes, we are accomplishing our vision. We are making progress. We are on the way. Over the past few years, we have been consolidating our growth and building our internal strength. We have been

strengthening our foundation, taking first steps in our vision, and setting the framework for the next steps.

And over the past six months, I've been thinking and praying a lot about what is next for our church. We have arrived at this level. We are stable. We are a real church. We are doing really good things in our world. People are becoming Christians here. Christians are learning God's love and living God's love. But what is next? Where are we going next? What are the next steps?

I'm not exactly sure, but I can't get over the feeling that there is a significant NEXT for us. I have this deep sense that God has something significantly new coming for us. I'm not sure what it is. It could be more people. It could be a new partnership with our community. It could be a new way of doing church together. It could be something we can't even imagine right now. It could be all of the above. But something is coming. There is a transition ... a change ... a NEXT step coming for us.

[11] This has started me thinking about another group that had a big NEXT coming. Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness. God was leading them in a way very similar to General Sam Houston and the Texas army. They were moving from place to place in the desert learning to obey God, becoming stronger as a people. God kept them in the desert for 40 years, preparing them for what was NEXT ... preparing, strengthening, waiting ... preparing, strengthening, waiting ... preparing, strengthening, waiting.

The book of Exodus has 13 chapters about the construction of the Tabernacle. One third of this book about Israel's escape from Egypt into freedom has instructions about making space for God's presence in their community. After the escape from Egypt, half of the discussion is about how to live and a full half of the building the tabernacle to make space for God. After Israel has finally finished all of the detailed instructions for the tabernacle, listen to what happens. These are the last words in the book of Exodus, the end of chapter 40. [11*]

³⁴ Then the cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. ³⁵ Moses could no longer enter the Tabernacle because the cloud had settled down over it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.

³⁶ Now whenever the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out on their journey, following it. ³⁷ But if the cloud did not rise, they remained where they were until it lifted.

³⁸ The cloud of the Lord hovered over the Tabernacle during the day, and at night fire glowed inside the cloud so the whole family of Israel could see it. This continued throughout all their journeys.

The cloud of fire represented God's presence. The people of Israel had to make sacrifices, share their resources, and intentionally make SPACE for God's presence in their community. This was a mobile tabernacle, so they had to pack it, move it, unpack it, and set it up again - every time they moved. For 40 years, God taught them to make space for God's presence and to obey God's leading step by step. Numbers 9 says that Israel learned to obey the movements of God. Whether the cloud stayed in the same place one day or one year, they followed the presence of God. They were waiting and learning and growing as God's people. They consistently made SPACE for God to lead them and to work among them.

If there is a big NEXT thing coming for us, then we need to make SPACE to see it and to respond to it. If God is wanting to do something new, then we need to give God space to do it in us and among us. I feel both of these things strongly. There is something NEXT for us, and we need to make SPACE for God in our church and in our individual lives.

[12] I've learned something over the past few months. Most of us are overloaded. 90% of our Koreans are overloaded, and half of our Westerners seem to be overloaded as well. In fact, even though I have preached against overworking for years, this month I've discovered that I'm also overloaded. It didn't happen all at once. I started coming to work a little earlier. I added a few evening meetings, and before I knew it, I was working way more than I intended. My standard work week was almost 60 hours. I was stressed, irritable, depressed, etc, etc. And, it's not just me. Most of our pastors are overloaded, and most of you are overloaded.

[13] Over the next year, our biggest goal as a church is to make more SPACE in our lives. We need to make space for God, space for rest, space for our families, space for our church, space for ourselves. We're going to work toward this goal in several ways.

- First, our pastoral team is going to read a book about balance and making SPACE. We know that we can't lead you somewhere we aren't. We want you to work less and to rest more, so we're going to go first in learning to be humble enough to know our limits. Throughout the year, we'll be sharing with you some of what we're learning.
- Second, in our worship services, we're going to take more time for silence. We're going to consciously make space for God every week when we gather.
- Third, I challenge you to improve your practice of the Sabbath this year. Take at least one step as an individual or with your family to get more rest once a week. Maybe you already practice a Sabbath. Maybe you feel like taking a whole day off is too much for you. OK, well, take one step to make it better. Let your kids come to church. Let your kids go to youth group. Only send them to one hakwon. Take a nap. Go to bed earlier on Saturday. Eat a family meal on Sunday. Go for a family walk. Do something to make space for God on Sundays. Take a step toward a better Sabbath.
- Fourth, all year long, starting with Advent, we'll be working through the Old Testament. The whole Old Testament is largely a story of waiting and anticipation. God keeps saying, "There is a big NEXT coming. Get ready. Wait for me. I'm about to do something." We'll be waiting with the people of the Old Testament, working with them to make SPACE in our lives for God to do his NEXT thing in us and in our church.

[14] Israel learned to make SPACE for God. They kept making space for God in the Tabernacle. When the cloud moved, they moved. When the cloud stopped, they stopped. Then, finally, when they were ready, God did the big NEXT thing. He led them across the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

I am not sure what our big NEXT thing is, and I'm not sure how long it will be before it happens. But I know that, for this year, our job is to make SPACE. Our job is to clear out SPACE in our church and SPACE in our lives for the glory of God to settle in among us like a cloud and to guide us on our journey.