

## Congregation Renewal....a Reason for Hope!

Dr. Ed Kruse and Grant Seaholm from HealthierChurch.org met with 55 rostered leaders and Bishop Rodger Prois from the Western Iowa Synod in Sioux City on Friday, May 2, 2014 at Augustana Lutheran Church in Sioux City. During their two-hour presentation they emphasized the urgency for congregation renewal and the importance of creating a sense of hope within congregations that may be lacking hope.

In the book, *Wake Up, Church!*, Dr. Kruse emphasizes the urgency with which we need to address cultural mistrust, economic crisis, and clear warnings to the church. Debt and budget shortfalls combine with flat statistics, while apathetic constituents yawn and frightened followers prepare to exit. In all the muck over the centuries, the gospel grew the body of Christ in spite of persecution and crises. Today's followers of Christ can transform the world by renewing congregations with global impact through the Holy Spirit. Congregation leaders are equipped to carry out this unfinished task.

The winds of change threaten to close the doors of many congregations. With God's help we can redirect the winds of change to generate energy to the leaders. Some of the challenges and opportunities facing congregational leaders today include:

### CHALLENGES:

- Turning life-draining apathy into...
- Turning life-paralyzing mistrust into...
- Turning life-stealing economic crises into...
- Turning life-poisoning un-involvement into...
- Turning life-ending shutting the doors into...
- Turning life-bondage fear into...

### OPPORTUNITIES:

- *life-giving spiritual growth.*
- *life-giving trust.*
- *life-giving generosity.*
- *life-giving participation.*
- *life giving sustainability.*
- *life-giving hope.*

Some of the tools available for enabling God-giving transformation include:

- Re-discovering hospitality and assimilation of guests
- Reviewing how we can identify and enlist future transformational leaders
- Reprioritizing our tradition and envisioning preferred future traditions
- Rejecting the God-forbidden worry and turning it into the God-given gift of faith

Choices for congregation renewal include the following openings for those who want to grow:

- Up to seven congregations per year in a one-year renewal of the culture for transformation. Three or four begin in this fall. Three or four begin in January or February 2015.
- Up to seven congregations per year engage in generosity development in four months during those same time periods.
- Up to seven congregations per year participate in a retreat toward gratitude in fall 2014 or in spring 2015.
- Up to seven Pastors, Executive Boards, or Councils per year engage in one to six mentoring sessions at any time during the year.

All openings are on first come, first served basis. Scholarship opportunities are available.

**For more information about congregational renewal opportunities or about a special discounted rate for Western Iowa Synod congregations working with HealthierChurch.org, please contact Pastor Jeff Unga, Director for Evangelical Mission at the Synod Mission Center: 712.732.4968, ext. 449.**