

“Twelve Pathways to Pizzazz”

1. Use Crisis as Opportunity

Consider yourself lucky when there is “nothing left to lose.” It may finally set you on a path to real change and innovation! Leverage times of crisis as opportunities to think and behave in new and exciting ways. Remember, nothing persuades like trial and success. “You can always go back to the way it was!”

2. Dream Huge!

Paul set out to convert the world to Christ. Why do we habitually think too small? What would be missing *in the world* if your church did not exist? What makes you indispensable to your people and community? How can you dream beyond your walls? No hubris intended, at DCC our vision is “to provide the best small church experience anyone can find in *the universe!*”

3. Take Away the Money

The greatest misconception is that more money will solve your church’s problems. Slash your budget and fund *nothing* but the essentials, then stand back and see where the Spirit is really leading your people! Fully funding our Basic Operating Budget (BOB) at DCC liberates us to initiate dozens of new projects on a strict “pay as you go” basis each year!

4. Establish a Strict “No Negativity” Policy

The ultimate paradox is a cynical Christian. Why do we allow this behavior in our churches? Insist on a culture of positivism, trust and possibility. At the end of the day, “It’s not about us! It’s about Jesus Christ.” Jesus trusted twelve highly imperfect disciples to carry on his work. Cultures of trust and affirmation create safe havens for failure. Disallow criticism. Allow people to fail with a flourish! Learn from each new experience!

5. Radically Decentralize Your Organization

Dynamic churches are those in which everyone truly matters. Examine and dismantle every organizational barrier to participation. Stop planning and controlling and start responding to how the Spirit is leading each and every individual in your church. Turn church leaders into facilitators. “*How can I help you make that happen?*” should be the question on every leader’s tongue. Sensational churches give assistance, not permission.

6. Make “Small” a Destination, Not a Default Position

Too many churches apologize for their size. Identify everything about being small that makes your church special and unique! House churches are where Christianity began. What can you do or offer that a big church can’t? What are the ways in which smallness makes you wonderful? Tell people about it!

7. Make Planning an Ongoing Process, Not an Event

What is the quickest way to make God laugh? Tell God your five-year plan. Shift your focus from long-term planning to continually capturing “strategic moments.” What opportunities can you take? What opportunities can you make? Guided by a clear sense of vision, a dynamic and unfolding future will be far more exciting than the one you carefully planned!

8. Manage Energy as Your Most Precious Resource

Money is not the scarcest resource in your congregation; it is the personal energy of your people. Eliminate energy-sapping, ongoing programs. Break activities into bite-sized projects that give everyone a chance to contribute something. These become wonderful “points of entry” for newcomers and busy parishioners. Allow people the freedom to follow their own energy! At DCC, our *Living the Promise* Church School involves 35-40 teachers developing their own hands-on curriculum for a one-room schoolhouse of twenty children!

9. Leave Perfectionism at the Door

Entrepreneurs never wait until a product is perfect to get it out the door. 80% is good enough---*just do it!*

10. Refrain from the Math

Churches are often obsessed with math, numbers of people not in the pews, number of dollars not in the bank, or number of empty square feet not being used. Let go of the numbers! Attendance at Sunday worship in this culture is an invalid measure of health. Identify, leverage and celebrate the resources you have! Use other measures of vitality besides bigness and growth. Spiritual energy and community impact are just two alternative metrics of success.

11. Love Technology

Paul’s ability to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ was directly related to the miracle of the Roman road system. Love technology and its ability to connect you to others! Embrace the web, email and social networking sites as opportunities to strengthen relationships. What technologies can you take advantage of? How are your people communicating? Be ahead of the curve!

12. Have Fun!

Love your church and what you do. Ministry is a privilege; there is no other job like it. Church is utterly unique; there is no other place like it. Make your church the space in your life that gives you the most joy! What would need to change at your church to make this a reality? Do it! Imagine a congregation in which 100% of your people are excited about being there. Think about Little Pot Man---it can happen!

Rev. Cindy Bagley was raised in the United Church of Christ and brings over 25 years of business experience in the corporate and entrepreneurial sectors to her work as “Pastor with Pizzazz” of the Dunbarton NH Congregational Church, a small church near Concord whose mission it is to be “Sensational at Being Small.”