

It's a New Year

Well friends, here we are. It is now 2010. It is a new year and a new decade (as some people count it). One of our nation's leading magazines has named the past decade as one of the worst in recent history. No doubt, it's been tough on a lot of people. The need for ministry continues to grow. God continues to be alive and very active in the midst of all the turbulence going on in the world. Jesus continues to ask us to have eyes to see and ears to hear. If we do, we will see new opportunities for ministry sprouting up around us. We will see fledgling new ministries like plants beginning to push up from the ground. The world around us is definitely changing. Here are some indications of that:

More adults now play video games than those who take educational courses (how many of you play video games?)

More Americans now drink bottled water than those who drink alcohol.

One in 10 male students said he carried a weapon to school within the last month.

While abortion rates are declining, one in three births is to an unmarried mother.

In December of 2007, people sent 48 billion text messages. One year later, in December of 2008, people sent 110 billion text messages.

Last year, the United States Post Office lost \$3.8 billion. Fewer and fewer people are using the mail service.

In 2000, \$24 billion of retail sales happened online. In 2007, \$128 billion of retail sales happened online.

In 2000, there were 1480 daily newspapers with a circulation of 55.8 million. In 2008, there were 1408 daily newspapers with a circulation of 48.6 million.

Women now receive more bachelor's degrees and master's degrees than men do. In 2007, for the first time, women received the same number of doctoral degrees as men.

3 in 10 people do not stay married long enough to celebrate their 10th wedding anniversary.

In 2007, there were 5,363 mass layoffs (50 employees or more). In 2008, there were 8,263 mass layoffs.

The community of Flint, MI, used to have 80,000 of its citizens employed at the local General Motors plants. Today, they have about 8,000 of their citizens employed by GM. For the first time since 2000, retail sales declined, while spending on lottery tickets increased.

More Americans now spend their leisure time hunting with firearms than playing baseball.

Twice as many Americans now go bowling than those who play golf.

Americans are eating more fish, wine, watermelon, and Italian cheese.

Americans are drinking less milk but raising more milk cows.

Phyllis Tickle has written a book called *The Great Emergence* where she says every 500 years, society goes through a great upheaval. She says that we are going through one of those once-in-500 years-upheavals right now. Much of what has been begins to pass away, and there is a great emergence of new thoughts, new ideas, new businesses, new ministries, new medicines, new ways of living, etc. It means that we are living in both a challenging and an exciting time to be in ministry. When so much is changing, there is a

greater opportunity to influence what the new shape of the culture will look like for years to come. Because things are changing so quickly, it's important for us to constantly have our eye on what God is doing in communities. We need to be asking ourselves how we can move back into our neighborhoods. What is the Spirit of God up to on our block? Where is Christ already at work and where is He inviting us to join Him in mission?

I hope that we can pray and imagine and dream and act in new ways this year, as we continue to strive to be faithful to Jesus Christ and what He is calling us into. No one individual and no one congregation can do this in isolation. As Christians, we are called into a community of followers of Christ. The presbytery is a learning community where we can grow together in what the Lord is teaching us. The presbytery is shifting from being primarily a governing body to being primarily a relational community to being primarily a mission agency. Let's find some new ways to work together this year. Let's follow the Savior into the streets and wherever it is He might be calling us to go.

God bless you!

Clark Cowden