

**Brant Hills Presbyterian: Stewards by Design - Introduction**  
**Twelve Keys to an Effective Church**  
**KEY #1: One Mission Outreach**

At Brant Hills, we are becoming Stewards by Design, meaning that we don't **incidentally** share the love of Christ with the world, we **deliberately** decide to do it and we act swiftly to do so.

The first key is: **One Mission Outreach.**

An example Callahan gives is this:

When Jesus was doing His ministry on earth, John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask: are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?

Jesus' reply was, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

Jesus didn't say that that was what he **used** to do or what he **would do in the future** when conditions were right. He reported what he was doing at that moment.

When someone comes to us to ask, "Are you really God's servants, or should we look elsewhere?" we should be able to give evidence by telling them what we are **now** doing as Christ's hands and feet and heart in the world.

What are some of the human hurts and hopes, life stages, common interests or concerns in our community calling out for help?

Maybe **we** are called to address **one** of them in a meaningful way.

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**KEY #2: Shepherding Visitation**

Remember our goal is to build on our strengths.

The second key is: **Shepherding Visitation**.

Callahan asserts that a strong, healthy congregation provides **generous** shepherding visitation, not only within the congregation but within the community as well, and not only by the minister but also by lay people.

It includes hospital and nursing home visits; visits with members and adherents of the congregation **AND** their **families** and **friends**; newcomers, friends in the community.

It benefits and blesses people's lives.

It can be done personally or in any number of ways: mail, e-mail, phone call, text message, over coffee or lunch, shopping, on the train, at celebrations, during tough or tragic times.

We make no demands – we simply share the grace of God, as Ananias did with Saul, who had been persecuting the church. He went as one sent from God and treated Saul as a brother. We too are sent from God to visit with His grace.

Is this a key we want to build on at Brant Hills?

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#### **KEY #3: Stirring, Helpful Worship**

The third key is: **Stirring, Helpful Worship.**

This includes worship that is warm and welcoming, worship that remembers the motivations of compassion, community and hope.

Stirring, helpful worship helps us grow lives of grace, and allows us to start our week acknowledging that God is in our lives right from the start, and will stay there for the six succeeding days until we meet again to acknowledge the same.

The music is inspiring and dynamic, the preaching is helpful and hopeful, the worship has power, balance and movement.

There is a generous spirit of celebration and joy. Our fellow worshipers are our sisters and brothers and are welcomed as family by at least one or two people.

Is stirring, helpful worship a strength at Brant Hills that we could build upon?

This is the third key to think, talk and pray about over the summer.

When we meet in the fall, we will remember to maintain our current strengths and choose which ones we wish to build on.

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**KEY #4: Significant Relational Groupings**

The fourth key is: **Significant Relational Groupings**. Again, our purpose is to identify which strengths at Brant Hills we wish to expand or add.

Every member of a congregation should be able to identify a grouping within the church where they feel a sense of belonging, where they find friendship and caring, roots and a sense of being “at home”.

The groupings can be social...(a lobster supper for example), or functional...(a choir), for mission work...(a fast to support World Vision), for Bible study...(Alpha), for the sharing of common interests...(the women’s monthly get-togethers), life stages...(youth group) – anything where the “tasks” of the group are not more important than the hurts and hopes of the individuals that make it up.

No group has to go on forever: the purpose can be one-time, seasonal, short-term, or in some cases longer-term. It is the **depth of our caring** and not the **frequency of our meeting** that counts. The Christian community does not just “know each other” one day a week, but cares about one another “every day...with glad and sincere hearts”.\*

Callahan suggests in “The Twelve Keys...” that “*The search for community ... is one of the major life searches, yearnings, and longings we all have.*” If we can provide significant relational groupings we have found a key to attracting new members.

Is this one of the key strengths that Brant Hills should grow?

\*Acts 2:46(beginning and end of verse)

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**KEY #5: Strong Leadership Team**

The fifth Key is: a **Strong Leadership Team**. Our objective is to identify which of the keys we wish to expand or add.

The important thing to remember about this key is that God has given each of us different gifts and we are effective when we apply the gifts we have to the tasks we undertake. In other words, if there is something to be done, we don't just find a warm and willing body, but we find the individual who is gifted with the strengths that will achieve the objective.

We don't undertake something if we don't have the gifts amongst us that will achieve that particular objective. Instead we go after objectives we are able to achieve with the talents we have available to us. The way Dr. Callahan puts it is, *"We send in the plays that the players can run."*

We recognize that there is a diversity of gifts, and one gift is not on a higher level than another – it is just different. Grassroots, ministers, leaders are a mutual family, encouraging each other, loving, listening and learning before we lead.

Leaders help, enough to be helpful, but not enough to create co-dependency – good leaders allow others to respond to the individual ways God is calling them to grow.

We are thinking ahead to determine which of the keys are strengths within Brant Hills: strengths to add to, or strengths to grow.

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**KEY #6: Solid Decision Making**

The sixth key is: **Solid Decision Making.**

When the key of **Solid Decision Making** is in place, decisions are made with compassion, wisdom, integrity, character, and a strong sense of openness and ownership. As an example to evaluate, consider our most recent major decision: to make our facility accessible.

With solid decision making in place, the structure is simple. Major proposals are shared gently and thoughtfully. People are allowed time to think them over and discuss them informally before being brought together for a formal decision.

Part of the process involves claiming our strengths: we decide on one or two current strengths to expand, and one or two new strengths to add. We do not focus our attention on what we are bad at.

When there is disagreement, as there will sometimes be, discussion revolves around principles and purposes, not personalities. Everyone is treated with respect.

We at Brant Hills will have the opportunity in the fall to make decisions on our key objectives, including whether a **Solid Decision Process** is one of the strengths we should claim or add.

Please give these first six keys your thoughtful consideration, discussion and prayer.

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**KEY #7: One Major Program**

We now move away from what are called the “relational keys” (the sources of satisfaction), to the “functional keys”, the absence of which can be sources of ***dissatisfaction***.

The first of the functional keys is **KEY #7: “One Major Program”** – one that directly serves individuals and groupings within the congregation. It is led by people from within the congregation, funded by the generosity of the congregation, and occurs in the church.

The focus may be some common interest, a human hurt or hope, a life stage, a community concern, or a combination of two or more of these. Its strength is measured not by the standard of what is available in other churches, but by the standard of competence for this type of program ***in the community***.

There are two ancillary benefits to having one major program that is being done competently: firstly, other programs within the church tend to rise to that level of competence, and secondly, people in the community assume a similar degree of excellence in other areas and some will visit us and perhaps join us.

It is helpful if our ***“one major program”*** has some sort of association with the first of the relational keys, our ***“one major mission outreach”***.

We look forward to exploring with you in the fall all twelve of the keys, and deciding together which two or three we will work on building or strengthening. Please keep this one in mind, along with the others.

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**KEY #8: Open Accessibility**

**KEY #9: High Visibility**

**KEY #10: Land, Landscaping and Parking**

Three additional “functional” keys are as follows:

The eighth key is “**Open Accessibility**”. It is measured by:

- **location accessibility** – is it easy to get there?
- **site accessibility** – are there enough ways in and out?
- **building accessibility** – do we have spacious entrances clearly indicating where the sanctuary is? – is it clear where to park? – is it clear that we welcome handicapped persons? and
- **people accessibility** – are we warm and welcoming? – do we show genuine respect? – do we show compassion?

The ninth key is “**High Visibility**” – do many people drive by the church each day? – can the church site be seen from one or more major street? – does the site look open and spacious?

The tenth key is “**Land, Landscaping and Parking**” – do we have sufficient usable land for our present and future mission? - does our landscaping give a good first impression? – do we have enough parking for our ten major Sundays of the year and for our normal Sundays and our weekday use?

Are these keys that are considered strong? Should they be strengthened, or do they not require any additional action at this time?

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**KEY #11: Adequate Space and Facilities**

The 11<sup>th</sup> key is: **Adequate Space and Facilities.**

When we consider **adequate space and facilities** we are invited to think about our various rooms and areas: about our how our worship space meets our Sunday to Sunday needs, including “special” Sundays, and how it fits with our other uses of it. We are encouraged to think about our fellowship area - do we make abundant use of it? Do our kitchen facilities match our needs? Do we have adequate church school space and adequate design and space for nursery, toddlers, kindergarten? Are our restrooms attractive, clean and spacious? Are the various areas arranged in such a way that they are easy to locate and easy to navigate? Are our facilities well maintained and do we have a schedule of preventive maintenance? Does our space feel like “home”?

Such questions sometimes make people nervous. Don't panic – no one is suggesting new construction. At this time we are just listing the keys. Remember, we will be **together** identifying our strengths and **together** deciding which ones to develop.

There is no hidden agenda – only with the collective wisdom of the congregation can we use the 12 Keys to create an environment conducive to the sharing of God's Word to the wider community. In the fall we will be asking for your insights as to which 1 or 2 strengths to grow, and which 1 or 2 to add.

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#### KEY #12: Generous Giving

The 12<sup>th</sup> Key is: ***generous giving***.

We believe that our congregation in general lives their lives with a spirit of generosity, and that not everyone is inspired to give in the exactly the same way. Dr. Callahan suggests that we can optimize this generosity by allowing people access to six sources of generous giving.

The first way is through ***spontaneous giving*** – to worthwhile causes that directly help people. An example at Brant Hills would be disaster relief after the Haiti earthquake. Three to five such opportunities a year encourage generous giving.

***Major community Sundays*** afford a second opportunity for generous giving: Christmas, Easter, Christmas Eve, and up to 7 more special Sundays where there is no special appeal for money, but where attendance is high. Examples would include for instance a special Sunday for celebrating and blessing new life in the community (births of children and grandchildren during that year), or a Sunday for remembering loved ones who have passed on – services primarily designed for outreach, but having the additional effect of encouraging generous giving.

The third is ***special planned*** giving opportunities, two to four times a year, such as “**Out of the Cold**”, “**Samaritan’s Purse**”, “**World Vision 30-hour Famine**”, “**Shifra Home**”.

The opportunity to give towards a ***major project*** is the fourth type of giving, such as special mission, building improvements, debt reduction, staffing – an example here would be our **accessibility project**.

***Annual giving*** is the fifth way, often done through offering envelopes or PAR (preauthorized remittance) and this method is well known to each of us.

The sixth is ***enduring gifts*** – endowments for specific, enduring projects.

Offering these six means of contributing encourages generous people to give generously.

This is the last of the twelve keys. We invite discussion amongst yourselves and with the team members, and your prayers that we will all be guided by God in our plans for the future of His church at Brant Hills.