

# ***View from the Pew***

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***A few take-aways from our annual meeting . . .*** A Chinese math question for fifth graders asks, “If a ship had 26 sheep and 10 goats onboard, how old is the ship’s captain?” It’s going viral because no one can figure out how to solve it. The solution may or may not have anything to do with math. How is the amount of cargo a ship contains supposed to help you figure out how old the captain is? In recent weeks, the internet has had a lot to say about this seemingly impossible math question. One person did come up with something of a solution – or at least an acceptable answer. He said that the total weight of the sheep and goats on this particular boat in China is high enough that it requires the operator to possess a boat license for five years. The minimum age for getting a license for such a boat is 23, so he’s at least 28. The administrators of the test said that the point of the question was to encourage critical thinking – outside the box. Solving the math problem isn’t necessarily relevant, they said. The point is to encourage students to think creatively and come up with their own answers. In the science fiction novel, “A Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy,” by Douglas Adams, in which 42 is the “Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, The Universe and Everything,” the answer is 42 – “*Everything is 42.*” So you be the judge. But as Christians, we may have something else to add to that.

The math question reminds me of our church, and how we, too, are at a point where we will have to think creatively – and come up with our own unique answers. And with an eye on the future health of our congregation, our challenges are not entirely related to math and science, either. As Pastor Durk has said, the options facing this congregation are many – and they do not necessarily center on receiving the most lucrative financial deal alone – if such a “deal” comes at the expense of other cherished traditions of our heritage here.

Recently, our pastor has skillfully woven his message of impending change before the congregation. In his sermons and conversations, he has softened us to the reality that we must adapt to the world around us to survive. With an eye on the Lead/Learn/Launch initiative, we are becoming accustomed to looking at new ideas and new models of service. But what form will that change take? What routines are we willing to give up in exchange for newer ones? Are we willing to give up some of the “familiar” for some of the “new?” What if we have to move, or build a new sanctuary, or give up part of our facility to accommodate some sort of cooperative enterprise which helps us survive? Should we share our pastor? Are we open to any or all of these? Will we view this as a problem or an opportunity? Anyone a year or two out of grade school quickly comes to the realization that the only constant in this world, of course, is change, and the sooner we are able to adapt to that old adage, the easier it is to take our daily dose – of life. The ideal scenario for many is to stay in the black while retaining tradition in our sacred church customs and fellowship, and grow our base – not an unwieldy population explosion, but in a steady acceptance of the new and the young in our cycle of life.

Lewis and Clark’s courageous entourage, paddling upstream on the wide Missouri River into the wilds of the Louisiana Purchase in the early 1800s, was truly an adventure of epic proportions. Not as epic, perhaps, our uncharted journey of the mind, body and spirit over the coming months and years, but an adventure, nevertheless.

