



## Dead Things

Churches are notorious for collecting dead things that no one has the heart to throw away. It's a dilemma because we are never quite sure just exactly who left it there, who it really belongs to, and whether or not someone's feelings will be hurt if they see it in the dumpster. But, let's face it. That beautiful cardboard dragon from Vacation Bible School 1968 probably is not going to be used again in the near future. And the teaching material that went with it won't be either. While it would have been ideal to pack it up and send it to a smaller church for their 1969 program, it didn't get done and it is time to move on.

We have a tendency to overlook the junk we pass by every day. It's a good idea a couple times every year to walk around the outside of your church and try to imagine seeing it for the very first time. Cast a critical eye on the mailbox – is it tippy? And the paint on the building – is it peeling? Starting to look faded? Are their numbers or letters missing from your sign? How about the parking lot – are weeds accumulating in the cracks and corners? Go all the way back to the dumpster. Looking pretty shoddy?

Do the trees need to be trimmed? What about the sidewalk – is it cracked and in need of repair? Are there any safety issues that should be addressed? Are there any obstacles that would prevent easy access to the building? Think about curb appeal as well. Do you need to plant some flowers or shrubs to dress it up a little?

Where there is a church complex it can be difficult to determine how to get to the auditorium. Be sure to have signs clearly marked for visitor parking and directions to the main service. Someone standing in or near the parking lot to greet and direct visitors is a wonderful way to make people feel welcome, especially if parking is a distance from the main building.

As you move inside, contemplate the foyer. Look at your displays of literature. Copies of a magazine dated March of 2000 tell a story. As you walk through the building, stand quietly in each room and see it with a fresh eye. Are there stacks of old curriculum sitting around? Broken toys in the nursery that need to be recycled?

If you're worried about hurting someone's feelings, stack all the outdated, unusable stuff together in the foyer and give the church one Sunday to help it find a new home. The Monday after, let it go. Yes, it is a shame to throw it away but leaving it in piles all over the church is not helping anyone either.

Don't let familiarity cause you to overlook that leaky toilet or the garbage disposal that doesn't work. Make a list and call a work day to get those nagging projects finished. Church surveys indicate that the two key areas visitors use to evaluate a church are the ladies' restroom and the nursery. And speaking of restrooms, it's really embarrassing to have to ask where the restroom is located. Be sure you have signs posted in strategic areas to direct people to restrooms, Sunday School classes and the church office.

How you care for what God has given you tells a story to those who visit your church. Is your church alive? Then be sure it isn't full of dead things.