

Announcer: Welcome to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. A podcast all about leadership, change, and personal growth. The goal, to help you lead like never before. In your church or in your business. And now, your host Carey Nieuwhof.

Carey Nieuwhof: Hi everybody, and welcome to episode 226 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof. I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. I'm recording this ... You are gonna hear it a little bit later, but I'm recording this the day after Eugene Peterson died. I got to tell you, I'm sad ... I'm glad for him he is going into his great reward and experiencing so much of what he wrote about in this life while he was with us. I'm sad for us, because man, one of the greatest voices of our generation is gone.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's happened a few times over the last few years. Losing Dallas Willard, earlier on. Think about Henri Nouwen, and others who have passed on. It leaves me really thinking, what really matters in this life? I just wanna say to you ... I wanna encourage you to really nurture your soul. I think that's one of the things that Eugene Peterson did so well. I'm so grateful for ... We'll link to it in the show notes, but I had a chance a year ago to interview him. It was one of the last interviews he ever gave, it's episode 152 of the podcast.

Carey Nieuwhof: 30 minutes with Eugene, that was like drinking from a deep stream. And so I just hope you are nurturing your soul. Taking some time to reflect and really focus on becoming rather than doing. I think that's the key to that sort of thing. I wrote a blog post about it recently as well. I just hope that as so many young leaders are listening to this, we need young leaders who will step into that void, and be the Eugene Petersons, or the Dallas Willards of the next generation.

Carey Nieuwhof: Who knows? One of those may be you. I definitely feel like I'm in the shallow end of the pool, but that was one of the things I was trying to do with the release of my last book, *Didn't See it Coming*. It's really about the soul work. It's really about working on your character, not just on your competency. If you haven't checked it out yet, I'd love for you to do that. You can head on over to didntseeitcomingbook.com, but my bookshelf is full of Eugene Peterson books. Who knows? Maybe one day it will be full of your books as well.

Carey Nieuwhof: Really grateful for him. I just wanted to reflect with that, because that's the why behind what we do here. We talk about all kinds of things on this podcast as you know. Today's guest is Adam Hamilton. Is one of the most influential pastors in the United Methodist Church. Leads one of the fastest growing, largest churches in the United States, and he's actually doing it in a main line context. It's amazing, he preached at the national prayer service. He's the author of multiple bestselling books. He writes all the time, and you are gonna find this fascinating because he doesn't use the standard model in his church either, at the Church of the Resurrection, which he founded.

Carey Nieuwhof: Adam and I have a wide ranging conversation. Thrilled to have him on the podcast. I know you are absolutely gonna love it. Adam, thanks for agreeing to come on. He's got this really cool thing too, where I'm doing the interview with

him via video. And I'm seeing this yellowed computer. I thought, "No, don't tell me his church is making him work on this 30 year old, 40 megabit hard drive computer."

Carey Nieuwhof: I asked him about it when the interview was over, and he was like, "Hey, you know what? That is actually part of my collection." He's got this collection of vintage Apple computers, which is super cool. You are gonna like him even more for that. I wanna talk to you a little bit about a conversation that we've been having on the podcast. That's about healthcare cost. Last time I sat down and had a conversation with Justin Clements, the co-founder and the president of Remodel Health.

Carey Nieuwhof: I asked him about people who are going bankrupt because of healthcare cost. That's a real concern of his, and the people at Remodel Health. This time I asked him, "Where can people go to negotiate better rates to keep them out of bankruptcy? Where can people go?"

Justin Clements: Number one is their employer, if they are getting their health insurance through their employer. The employer has to make the decision for them most of the time. They got to talk with their employer about, "Hey, can we get a lower deductible, or is there something we can do to better safeguard if and when something catastrophic happens?"

Carey Nieuwhof: That's what most employees and most employers don't realize is that you can negotiate individually with your employer. You are saying, "Wait a minute. I've got 30 employees, or 308. We have a one size fits all healthcare plan." Well, not anymore, that's what Remodel Health is reinventing.

Carey Nieuwhof: What if you could have healthcare plans that were tailored to individual needs of employees? You have one person who needs x and they get x, and another needs y and they get y, and variable plans for different people. Whether you have a few employees or hundred or thousands. If you are faith based organization, check out remodelhealth.com/carey to find out more and receive a free quote and buying guide today. Did you know on average most churches will free up between 60 and \$100,000 a year to repurpose towards projects that can help you do more in your ministry?

Carey Nieuwhof: It's an amazing model, check it out, remodelhealth.com/carey to find out more. Speaking of the internet, which appears to be here to stay, let's talk about the future. I really believe that strong leadership requires a strong engagement strategy. I've been blogging about that for years. It's not about ministering to your members just on Sunday anymore. There are actually seven days a week to connect with your community and nurture them. That requires mobile strategies. The question is, what's yours? What's your giving strategy, your engagement strategy, your mobile strategy?

Carey Nieuwhof: I love what Pushpay is doing. I think they are the leader at keeping what we do at the cutting edge of technology. They have a huge heart to serve the church, and they help more than 7,000 customers process billions, yes, starts with a b, of dollars in generosity last year. They can help you too. Right now there is a special offer for listeners of this podcast. Go to pushpay.com/carey, and you can sign up to talk to a representative who has a special offer just for this podcast listeners. No obligation, just a chance to talk to an expert in church technology. I hope you check that out. [Pushpay.com/carey](https://pushpay.com/carey), special offer for a limited time. Go check that out right now.

Carey Nieuwhof: In the meantime, let's jump into my conversation with Adam Hamilton. I think when we talk about his long legacy in ministry, hopefully the little ... What was that? Homely on Eugene Peterson in character will ring even more true. It's what we need, we need leaders who serve for the long term, and here is my conversation with Adam Hamilton.

Carey Nieuwhof: Adam Hamilton, welcome to the podcast. I'm so glad that we finally had a chance to connect.

Adam Hamilton: I am too Carey. I'm appreciative of what you've written and I'm really grateful to have a chance to visit with you in person today.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'd love for you ... I've followed you as have many of my colleagues for years, you are part of the United Methodist Church. We have a lot of friends in that denomination, a lot of good people. You are the outlier in that denomination, one of the fastest growing, and the largest in your denomination, and certainly one of the most influential mainline churches in America. You've also happened to sell more than 2,000,000 books, which if anybody is wondering, that's a lot of books.

Adam Hamilton: That's a lot of books.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'd love for you to back up this story and tell us how you got involved in ministry, how you got involved at your church, and a little bit about the journey in a nutshell.

Adam Hamilton: I'll just start out. I was baptized Catholic as a baby, I probably mentioned. Nominally religious growing up. My folks would take me to church from time to time. My mom was a protestant Church of Christ. Dad was Catholic, and so they tried to find something between Catholic and Church of Christ, and they ended up with a Methodist church. We went there for several years, and then my folks got divorced, we dropped out. It was a freshman in high school, I was invited to a little Pentecostal church.

Adam Hamilton: I began reading my Bible there. I considered myself an atheist, but I went because they had cute girls. I started ... As I was going they all carried their bibles with them, and I thought I should read what's in this book. I got out the

Catholic Bible my grandmother had given me when I was a child, a letter from the pope in the front, how to pray the rosary. I began reading it, and I made a commitment my freshman year in high school to read the entire Bible.

Adam Hamilton: As I'm reading through it I got to the new testament, and read the gospel of Matthew, and was really taken by Jesus. Read the gospel of Mark, and at that point to sure about the Resurrection, but the rest of it made sense to me, and I was compelled by Jesus, read the gospel of Mark, and I found myself really again drawn to him. Got to the gospel of Luke, and I loved Luke's gospel, the gospel of the nobodies, the marginalized. When I got to the end of the gospel for the first time the Resurrection made sense to me.

Adam Hamilton: I thought, how else could the story end? If it ended with Jesus in the tomb, and evil had the final word, and hate, and sin? And so if somehow he was representing God, he was God, then as a 14 year old kid I thought, this is how it had to end. He had to be raised. I got on my knees as a little kid, as a teenager I got on my knees and I said, "Jesus I wanna follow you. I know I'm just 14 but if you can do anything with me, I pray you will." Got called to ministry when I was 16 and preached on youth Sunday at our little Assembly of God Church, and got married right out of high school because Jesus was coming back at any moment. That's what our pastor told us every Sunday. We got married the week after graduation, and we've been married 36 years now.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's amazing.

Adam Hamilton: Went to Oral Roberts University in Tulsa Oklahoma to be a Pentecostal pastor, but I had a lot of questions. I had a lot of theological questions. My freshman year in college my best friend who was my best man at my wedding, and his older brother who was my youth pastor were both electrocuted. They were killed in a terrible accident. Left me with a lot of questions and the odyssey and issue of God sovereignty and the providence of God, and how we make sense of God's work in the world where suffering happens. I began to really wrestle with that and started searching and ended up trying to figure out ... Once I resolved that it took a year of working through that as I came to some resolution which I captured on a little book I wrote some years ago called Why?

Adam Hamilton: I found myself searching for a new church home. A place where it was okay to ask questions, where it was ... I loved this sense of God. I was really grateful for the church I was in, the people they were so great. For me I was, when I was in college it was like, "There is something else I'm looking for." I ended up reading more about John Wesley and the early Methodists, and I found myself drawn back to that church I'd gone to when I was a kid, and I joined the United Methodist Church.

Adam Hamilton: Anyway, we went to Southern Methodist university in Dallas for a seminary. And graduated and after two years I started the Church of the Resurrection. My wife and I, and our two kids. We started 28 years ago with four people, and a dream of reaching thinking people who were nonreligious and nominally religious and

helping them become deeply committed Christians and sending them out to transform the world everyday. It's been an amazing journey since then, and the church has grown like crazy, and most of the people here are those nonreligious or nominally religious people we were talking about. They've become people who really are striving to be the real deal striving to follow Jesus.

Carey Nieuwhof: You used a phrase that really intrigues me, thinking people. So, can you unpack that a little bit?

Adam Hamilton: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Because I think it strikes me as a former reformed Presbyterian. That was one of the things that really drew me to that dream was you don't have to park your brain. Is that what you are getting at?

Adam Hamilton: Absolutely. John Wesley the founder of Methodist was an Oxford professor. The Wesleyan revival, the 18th century evangelical revival that he led started on a college campus. It started on the campus of Oxford. This idea of uniting both the head and the heart was really important in the early methodism. I find that many nonreligious people have been turned off by presentations of Christianity that don't make sense to them that seem either intellectually vapid or unable to withstand critical scrutiny.

Adam Hamilton: I love to engage those folks to try to help them think about how you can be a thinking person, you can have questions, you can be an intellectual, and at the same time a follower of Jesus Christ. That's been our focus. The church is located in a community where a large number of people have graduate degrees, and we've reached a large number of folks who are highly educated, and it's been a great ride.

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you think the internet has changed the game a little bit? You started 28 years ago. Now it seems like everybody's got ... As I often to say to our team strongly held, weakly formed opinions.

Adam Hamilton: I think that's right.

Carey Nieuwhof: Sometimes they are strongly held and they strongly formed, but often they are strongly held and weakly formed opinions. Now you can google your answer to everything, anything. Has that changed preaching for you over the years?

Adam Hamilton: I'll tell you, first of all, the internet and technology has dramatically improved I think ... Has the potential to dramatically improve people's preaching. We have access to information that no generation of previous Christians ever had access to. We can look at things in the original languages, we can research what our early church fathers said. We have access to information and it can be overwhelming, but to me it is exciting because it means that I can address things in sermons that 30 or 40 years ago I would have never had the access to the

information that I can include in messages. That is exciting. I think it also there is some accountability because your people can look up for whatever you are preaching about.

Carey Nieuwhof: They are fact checking you.

Adam Hamilton: Yeah. They are fact checking you. I think about those guys who take other people sermons and re-preach them, and then get found out, because somebody is listening to that preacher's sermon out there. I think it does raise the standard in our preaching and gives us lots of potential to have even better preaching than we've ever had before. It's also possible to do, if you are not doing your homework, to do shoddy work and end up with something that's maybe not as well formed as it could have been or should have been.

Carey Nieuwhof: Do you find that the average person attending your church over the years has become more educated because of access to information? Would you say when you are running into the people you are trying to reach, let's say a neighbor, a friend, a colleague, or probably not a colleague, because you are in ministry. Somebody that you are building into, do you find the questions have gotten better or the positions have gotten harder or more entrenched because they're better read these days or not really much of a change?

Adam Hamilton: Yeah. I think ... There is a couple of varieties of folks that are showing up in our congregations. One are those who are really well informed and they love to study and grow deeper. For those folks the internet has really helped them be able to have access to information. You mentioned something a second ago, and that's the ability to discern which strands of information is good information. This is true, you go to the Christian book store, and small groups are going, they are trying to find a good book to study.

Adam Hamilton: How do they decide that? They look at the cover. What does the cover look like? We only see thumbnails on covers because we are buying things on Amazon. We are not even holding it in our hands. And so if all you have is the cover to go by, or hear somebody who has a doctorate, and you don't know how to discern, where is the person coming from, what education is poured into them? If you are looking for a book, who is the publisher? There are certain publishers probably have a little more integrity than other publishers do.

Adam Hamilton: Just because something is in writing or just because it's on the internet, it doesn't make it true. I think there are some people who understand that, and other people who can be confused by the cacophony of voices and not being able to discern which ones are good voices, and which ones are voices that maybe aren't very well informed. I think for the most part ... Here is the other ... We find folks who are looking for more information, and searching and using the internet in this way. Then we find a lot of folks I think in almost every church who come in and just say, pastors tell me what to believe. Tell me what to think, I believe it because you believe it.

Adam Hamilton: Here I keep pushing, I wanna push people to go, "No, I want you to study to show yourself up, I want you to grow in the grace and knowledge." I want you to ask questions. It's okay to ask questions. I want you to ask questions of me. Just because I spent 20 hours working on this sermon doesn't mean I'm right. I want you to engage your intellect in this. I find that there are some folks who come and just ... And even really thoughtful people.

Adam Hamilton: I know a guy, I've known him for a long time. He's a very successful business man. Well respected in his field, but when it comes to religion he accepts whatever is handed to him. I'm like, "Really? You are asking things that are just like, these are nonsensical." If there is somebody who is passionate and charismatic who tells them that he buys it and he suspends his logic when it comes to his faith and it's like, "Don't do that." Keep asking questions when it comes to your faith. There is a lot of bad religion out there. A lot of Christianity is not thoughtfully conceived or carefully considered.

Carey Nieuwhof: What do you find if you are in an area, your campuses are in an area where you have people with graduate degrees, college education, what are the questions they are asking? And then what are some approaches that are really helpful to building them? I've always, as a background as a lawyer, spent 10 years in university. I've always felt like these are often the forgotten people. They do have strongly held opinions, and sometimes they are strongly formed, and sometimes it can be harder to reach them than others. I'm really curious what you are learning in that area.

Adam Hamilton: One of the things that we do regularly is find out what questions people are asking. Sometimes I even preach a couple of times at sermon seasons like Christmas Eve candle, which is our biggest services of the year. We've had people write down their questions. This was ... Before we were really using the internet as much. The first time I did this it was probably 1996 or so.

Adam Hamilton: I said, Christmas Eve, I'm giving you a three by five card in your bulletin. I'd like for you to take it out, I want you to write down the three hardest questions you can think of that you've wondered about when it comes to faith. We are gonna compile those. We are gonna take the six most frequently asked questions and after Christmas Eve is over with, starting the second Sunday of the new year., we are gonna take the questions that you've asked. These are, two thirds of visitors who are just there for Christmas Eve.

Adam Hamilton: We are gonna let you set the agenda for the sermon series. And we are gonna take those questions. So we did a series on questions that people ask that keep them from faith. I knew what the questions would be upfront, because I'd had plenty of conversations with folks. Letting them set the agenda for the sermons really led them to want to come back. The number one question people wrestle with especially true of nonreligious people, but I'll tell you even Christians wrestle with regularly is again the question of the odyssey. Why do bad things happen to good people? How do we make sense of this?

Adam Hamilton: My loved one who went to church all their lives and they have cancer, or my friend's daughter who was raped, or how do I make sense of a loving God in the light of that? Helping people think about God's work in the world, what God does and doesn't do is a really ... I just find that's critical for both the people who are Christians and those who are wrestling. Were asking questions about, how do we read the Bible? How do we make sense of the Bible?

Adam Hamilton: I think they are thoughtful people who recognize some of the challenging parts of the Bible. What do we do with genocide, what do we do with passages about the role of women and how women are treated, same sex marriage? All of these things are questions that people are asking saying, "Okay, I've heard the quote the Bible says, or the Bible says that I believe that settles it." But it doesn't seem to be that kind of book that that's ... It seems like there should be ... Either I want to be able to question that, or maybe I need to find a different religion or a different book because I can't ... Some of these things I can't buy.

Adam Hamilton: Those are the kinds of questions. What do we do with people of other religions? Why are there so many hypocrites in the church? Why are Christians so mean or such jerk sometimes? I hear those questions. Those are not the questions that my faithful committed church members are asking, but those are questions our friends are asking. We try to answer those questions a lot here at Resurrection.

Adam Hamilton: We just finished a sermon series from January to February. It was a reworking of a sermon series we did about 15 years ago on the religions of the world, Christianity and world religions. We asked questions about what is our theology of religions, how do we make sense of these other religions? Why is there one God? Does God just show everybody the way it is? This is the questions are often asked.

Adam Hamilton: We spent five weeks starting at the face, and each week we talk about ... And with great humility and just graciousness, here is what our Buddhist friends believe. Here is where we find some common ground. Here is where we've disagreed. It's okay for us to disagree. This is what Christianity, this is a different answer that Christianity gives and buddhism gives. Here are some common places. You can say, "I really value this about my Hindu neighbors. I love this about them, and that's something we share in common as Christians and Hindus. And here are some places where we differ that doesn't mean I can't love them."

Adam Hamilton: When you approach it that way, people go like, "That's really cool. I've just learned something about my Hindu neighbors I didn't know, and I've learned how to be gracious to my pastor, and how to be humble in how I approach my own faith. After hearing about all these faiths, we had hundreds of people say, "I think I'd like to be a Christian." It's that kind of stuff that we are trying to address.

Carey Nieuwhof: Why did you decide to start a church?

Adam Hamilton: I had a passion for wanting to reach again people who were outside of the church. I wanted to find who are the folks who like me have a lot of questions, and for whatever reason they've stepped away? I felt like in the community where I had come to faith in Christ was where we wanted to start this church. The church is located just a couple of miles from where I lived in high school. I thought if we ... There was no United Methodist church in the middle of that community.

Adam Hamilton: I thought if we could start a church and start it intentionally focused on the people who aren't church'd, which of course every church wants to do. I just felt like God wants me to do that. As we began to lay the church, began to design the church, put it together. We designed it specifically to look much more like a main line church. We are United Methodist Church. Almost everybody in 1990 was doing sort of Willow Creek style worship. The video screens, contemporary music, and it was sicker, sensitive and all that.

Adam Hamilton: We tried to be sensitive to the target audience of nonreligious people, but we thought, most of those people when they went to church as children, and most of them went to church as children, went to a mainline church. Maybe instead of hiding the fact to our mainline, maybe we should actually have them walk in and go, "This feels like the church I went to when I was a kid." I would wear a pulpit robe on Sundays. We would have the Lord's Prayer, we had a choir. We were singing traditional hymns, prayer of confession. It was interesting, there was 20 churches started in this community in a five year period of time.

Adam Hamilton: It was this one that took off. It just exploded and people were like yes. The thing was, it looked familiar to them, and at the same time it felt relevant, it felt meaningful, it moved their hearts. They felt a call to action, they felt intellectually I think challenged. They felt their hearts strangely warmed as John Wesley would talk about it. They felt called to go live up their faith with their hands. That's what we really emphasized, the head, the heart and the hands. That we are going to speak, we are gonna offer the faith in a way that's intellectually meaningful, that teaches both good theology and teaches scripture, and the ability to critically engage theology, and faith and scripture.

Adam Hamilton: We are going to lead people to a transformational relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, with the holy spirit working our hearts and minds. We are gonna send people out ... Every week there is gonna be a challenge as to how you live out your faith, so that God's kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven in some small way through you. That seemed to be a recipe for people inviting their friends and coming to faith and changing the world.

Carey Nieuwhof: How has your liturgy or style of service evolved over the last 28 years?

Adam Hamilton: We have ... Here at our Leawood campus we have five services ... Actually no, we have six services a weekend. In those six services, two of them are traditional, with choir and orchestra, and I wear a pulpit robe still in those services, and we have a little bit of liturgy. We might responsibly read a Psalm or

something else. Two are like that, and four of them are more modern contemporary, whatever the language you'd want to use for it.

Carey Nieuwhof: So you've brought in the band and the screens?

Adam Hamilton: Yeah, bands, screens and all that. We use the screens in the traditional as well. It's interesting. Sunday, we just launched two weeks ago a 11 o'clock modern service, at the same time as our 11 o'clock traditional service. The 11 o'clock traditional last Sunday had 2,200 people in it. The modern service had 800. It's in a room that's a bit smaller, it had 800 people. I had a young family walk in, brand new first time. I could tell they had no idea who I was. I'm like, "Hey, how are you?"

Adam Hamilton: They said, "We are here for the first time. Actually to see what your church is like." I said, "Great. Let me tell you where the service is more rock and roll in the foundry hall down the way here. Then we've got the traditional with choir." They said, "We'll go check out the one with rock and roll." Obviously it's not rock and roll but more modern music. I said, "Let me take you in the sanctuary first." We have this beautiful stain glass window that tells a story, really the entire Bible, Genesis to Revelation. It's 100 foot wide, and 35 feet tall.

Adam Hamilton: I said, "Come in here. You are gonna see the sanctuary and then I wanna send you down this other way." They went down the other way. I left after the first hymn in the traditional service to go see how the modern service was doing. I thought, "I'm gonna go and check it out and see how they are doing." I'm walking down there to the modern service and they are walking back to the traditional. I'm like, "What's going on?" They said, "I didn't connect with this as much. We really wanna go back and experience your worship in the sanctuary." We had 160 people join the church Sunday afternoon.

Adam Hamilton: We have this thing called coffee with the pastors, and we do this every month or so. There was a young couple in their twenties that were joining. I'm like, "Hey, it's great to see you. What service do you worship in at 11 o'clock?" I said, "Do you worship in the modern service?" "No, I sing in the choir." He plays in the orchestra. I'm like, "Okay. Cool."

Carey Nieuwhof: So it's not all gray hairs?

Adam Hamilton: Yeah. It is a lot of gray hairs but I find that there are young adults who are really drawn to the traditional, and there are young adults who are really drawn to the modern. There are 70 year olds who are really drawn to the modern, and 70 year olds who are really drawn to the traditional. I love the fact that we have a wide array of worship experiences. Same sermon in all of those, different music. But even in the modern services, one of the things we tell all of our modern band leaders is every week at least one hymn.

Adam Hamilton: We draw from our tradition, rearrange it if you need to, rewrite it. I don't care if you rewrite the words and keep the tune to sing better, but I want us to have an anchor in our traditional while we are at same time introducing new hymns and new praise songs and other things. I think that's a ... I want us to be more thoughtful. I want the theology. Whether the music is different and style, I want the theology to be the same. I want people to come in and know that's our DNA. Whether we are in the modern service or the traditional service.

Carey Nieuwhof: I'm sure you don't teach every single Sunday, but are you the principal communicator and then do you do video into the different venues and campuses?

Adam Hamilton: I preach probably 40 Sundays a year.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Adam Hamilton: And I'm 54 now. My goal is to preach one less Sunday a year over the next 10 years so that the church is used to me not being in the pulpit as much. The songs are recorded on Saturday night, at our Saturday night service. We tweak them, if I say tonight or something that needs to be pulled out, if there is some part of it that doesn't feel like it's connecting we pull that out.

Adam Hamilton: Then that's uploaded to the internet, and it's downloaded to each of our campuses and in our venues. We use that and then we have some churches across the country who also use it. They are partner churches, and so they will either use it, or the pastor will watch it and we'll send them the manuscripts. Then they rework the sermon to make it their own in their context. We have about, I think about 15 churches are like that.

Carey Nieuwhof: How many people attend your particular locations, the four locations over the course of a weekend?

Adam Hamilton: The Leawood campus which is where I preach live will have between, Sunday I think we had 6,800. We'll run anywhere from, during the school year 6,000 to 7,500, 8,000 or something like that. Probably 7,500 the Leawood campus. That doesn't include children and Sunday school. That's just worshipers. Then we have at our west campus another 1,000, our downtown campus, downtown Kansas city has another 1,000, a little over that now. We have Blue Springs campus runs about 350.

Adam Hamilton: Then we have an online campus which will run between 25 and 3,500 on a normal Sunday. Those are again, they are joining us for worship. They are logging in, they are giving ... They are signing up to volunteer. They are joining the church, all that kind of stuff.

Carey Nieuwhof: You are not even including online, you are pushing 10,000 people in a weekend?

Adam Hamilton: Right.

Carey Nieuwhof: Which is exception in a mainline context these days.

Adam Hamilton: Right.

Carey Nieuwhof: Is that the largest or one of the largest United Methodist Churches?

Adam Hamilton: It's the largest United Methodist Church in the world, we have Korean Methodist churches that are larger, but they are not United Methodist. So we are largest United Methodist Church. Among mainline churches in the United States, depending on what you categorize as mainline, we are either the largest or one of the two or three largest. There is a couple of Presbyterian churches that are not a part of the mainline. Yeah. If you are looking at the more evangelical ones then we are right there with one or two others I think, at least one other.

Carey Nieuwhof: It's fascinating because most mainline denominations, frankly evangelicals would agree most evangelical denominations are not growing these days. Everybody seems to be stalled out. How do you explain your outlier status and why you think by the grace of God your church was able to buck the trend?

Adam Hamilton: A lot of these things are things that you know and other people know. I'll say also, while we are continuing to grow, we've watched worship attendance slow down, and one of the things we know about that is that at least in our setting. When we started the average committed person was there three Sundays a month. Now we survey this, we take attendance every Sunday. I can go on our database and see the attendance and every single member every Sunday of the year.

Carey Nieuwhof: How do you do that?

Adam Hamilton: We have attendance books that we pass during the service. And we ask them to sign in. We have volunteers who log all 10,000 names in the computer every week. It's pretty amazing.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's incredible.

Adam Hamilton: It is incredible. Then we try to encourage regular attendance. When people join, and of the expectations for membership is please don't join unless you are willing to be here every single day when you are not sick or out of town. If you are out of town, join us online, or if you are sick you can join us online. We know you won't be able to fulfill that, but that's our goal is to have you here every week.

Adam Hamilton: I tell folks, "I want you to get at least a B in worship attendance." Being in worship attendance means you get 80% or better. You miss about 20%. If you

get an A in worship attendance, and this is a silly little thing, but people respond to what you reward. We put a little sticker on their name tags. We have name tags, everybody has name tags.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's awesome.

Adam Hamilton: People are like, I hear all the time, "nobody wants a name tag". We've got our people used to doing it. You put this little sticker on there and it just says, committed to worship. And it has the year. What we found is, if we recognize, when I list them in my pastor's e-note, when we started doing this five years ago, we had like, maybe 100 people who were there, 95% of the time or better.

Adam Hamilton: Last year it was like 800. As we started recognizing this, people started responding. They are like, "Hey, you noticed that I'm here." It's a way ... If I see somebody with that little sticker I'm like, "Thank you so much for your commitment to worship. For being here every week. I'm so proud of your commitment." Those are little things we've done to try to back the trend of people used to come three times a month coming once a month. That's the thing is if people are coming less frequently to worship, you can have the same number of people but your attendance is gonna go down.

Adam Hamilton: You can grow, and your attendance is gonna stay flat even though you are growing. You ask those people, "Are you committed to church?" Yeah, I'm committed. I'm committed to Jesus. I'm committed to church. How often do you go? I'm there every Sunday, but then you look at their attendance sheet you realize they are not. Let me go back to your question of what did we do?

Adam Hamilton: I would say one of the things that was interesting, we actually decided to be a mainline church. We decided to do things in a way that looked more traditional and connected with people who didn't go to church, who used to go to a church like this. They used to go a Methodist, Presbyterian, Disciples, Catholic, Lutheran church. That was somewhat unique. And then we were constantly thinking about, what does this sound like to somebody who is a nonreligious person? What does it feel like to them?

Adam Hamilton: A lot of times the song that we sing and how we sing, like 20 minutes of standing and singing does not work for nonreligious people. They don't know if they even believe in God. If I'm gonna stand for 20 minutes while you all sing. I don't know. We try to figure out, how do we do this in a way that helps the people who are Christians and want to worship a longer period of time to do that while at the same time do it in a way that connects with the nonreligious people?

Adam Hamilton: We explained everything we were doing. This is why we are doing this in worship. I explain the meaning of Eucharist every time we have Holy Communion. I explain the meaning of baptism every week. We find ... We introduce songs by ways of, this song was written at this time. I want you to

listen at this one line. This is powerful. I learned this from the symphony here in Kansas City. I went to a concert where the symphony, it was for non-symphony people. And the symphony conductor was explaining, "Listen, to this is crescendo. This is what the composer wanted you to feel when you got there."

Adam Hamilton: Then they played them like, that is really cool. I would have never got that had somebody not taken the time to explain it. Some of that, part of it was just a real dogged determination that we are a church for, intentionally for reaching those who are nonreligious and nominally religious. It's in our bones, we talk about it, it drives everything. We do the sermons, series are built around that. The outreach is built around that. We are really focused on this idea of building a Christian community where the disconnected, the nonreligious, and nominally religious are becoming deeply committed Christians.

Adam Hamilton: The sermons I think were designed to speak to that group of people. We had a major focus on serving the poor. And addressing people in the community. This is a more affluent community. Many of those people wanted to make a difference in the world, and they realized, to whom much is given much is expected. And so we ... It's an expectation for membership, if you are gonna join you have to serve the poor in the community and you have to service inside the walls of the church. A number of these things that I think helped us.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's helpful. A couple of questions for you. One on music, you said if you are not a Christian ... We wrestle with this tension every week at Connexus. We want to create a church unchurched people love. Do we limit the songs, to like two or three worship songs, do you do a similar thing? What do you do to engage that tension? Because you are right, as Rich Birch said on numerous occasions from UnSeminary, it's like church is the only place people sing out loud in public anymore.

Adam Hamilton: That's exactly right. A couple of things we did... We do have one of or two of our services where there is gonna be a little more singing. Maybe there is four songs upfront. Typically it's gonna be 14 minutes. There's gonna be no more than 14 or 15 minutes upfront which we are singing. Actually, that includes the introduction and the welcome.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's about us, too.

Adam Hamilton: Then again it's being mindful of the words to the songs. The hurricane song, I forget what it's called.

Carey Nieuwhof: I know what you mean.

Adam Hamilton: The sloppy wet kiss. I'm like, "Guys, either don't sing the song or change the words," because if I'm thinking personally I'm a thoughtful person, and I've just tried to figure out this whole Jesus thing. You are gonna talk about a sloppy wet kiss is the way I'm relating to God. That sounds great if you are an eighth grade

girl. It probably doesn't sound so awesome if you are a PhD. We just try to figure out ... Likewise, we do this when it comes to inclusive language for people.

Adam Hamilton: We are looking at, when it comes to ... Our children are no longer learning the convention that man, male, he means everybody. In school they don't learn that. Then they come to church and it's one of the few places where we are still using exclusive language for human beings. So we try to make sure that we are thoughtful about the language we use, the metaphors we use in our songs.

Adam Hamilton: Most of our folks are pretty good at thinking about that today and going, does that really fit our theology, does it speak to ... The last two weeks in our traditional service, I talked to our director of traditional music. I said, "You pick beautiful hymns, they are classic hymns, but those words no longer speak to people today. What I'd like for you to do is rewrite the words. I want you to rewrite, take the same tune, speed it up a little bit." I said, "There are several lines in there that are off putting that don't reflect how we talk about God today."

Adam Hamilton: I don't remember even what they were. They were hymns you would be familiar with, but when you are singing and they are singing them like ... This cannot be connecting these people to God, because these words don't ... They are not the same words we use today. Let's put it in languages that we would use today. Let's take the theology, keep the theology and let's reword it a little bit.

Carey Nieuwhof: I got to ask you about the attendance too. That idea of the red sticker on their name tag. Obviously, the cynic might say, "Great, your attendance is up, it kept growing. Awesome." And every lead pastor is like, "That's kind of cool." What do you think it is doing for those members? Obviously there is a deeper theology under that talking to you. What do you think the benefit to the frequent attender is over the casual or infrequent attender?

Adam Hamilton: I think first of all I remind our people ... going to ... First of all, you can go to worship online. It used to be on television. People could sit and watch Joel Osteen or whoever on television. There is something about being in the community that's important. I tell our members ... Sunday at the end of the time when they joined I had them join hands with people they didn't even know and pray for the person on their right and on their left in silence. I said, Look at those people. Here is the thing. If you stayed home and listened to a sermon online or something else, this is what you don't get. You don't get community.

Adam Hamilton: Community matters, being with people ... We talk about stretcher bearers a lot here at the church. From the story of the man who was paralyzed. His friends carried him on a stretcher to Jesus, ripped off Peter's roof and lowered him before Jesus. We all need those. We all need those stretcher bearers, those people who are gonna carry us when the wheels are coming off our life. In order to have that you've got to develop community. That's one benefit of being together in worship and physically attending.

Adam Hamilton: In addition to that there is something ... When I'm not in the pulpit I have a place at the lake where I write. And I worship every weekend online when I'm down at the lake. I can tell you singing from my couch is not the same as singing with the rest of the believers there when we gather. Again, the community is important. My aim is, every week when they are there, they are going to have an encounter with Christ in some way when they are, Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered."

Adam Hamilton: I'm counting on the fact that there is gonna be an encounter. We are praying for that. We pray in the room during the week for God's spirit to work through us, and to ready the place for worship. Musically we'll sing together, musically we are listening to someone else sing the gospel. The sermon, I'm counting on the fact that God is gonna speak through the message somehow, it doesn't matter who the messenger is. That something happens when we have adequately prepared that is going to deepen people's faith.

Adam Hamilton: Our goal is again in every worship service, that you are gonna be intellectually, theologically, biblically informed as a result of being here. You are gonna be spiritually transformed by what happens in worship. You are gonna be called to go serve God in the world. You are gonna be inspired and equipped to go serve God in the world. If somebody is there once a month they are gonna get 25% of that. If somebody is there four times a month they are gonna get something every single week that I hope is gonna send them out.

Adam Hamilton: We tell people, "Look, one day at 7:00 you show up and you are remembering your true north. You are finding grace and forgiveness. You are remembering who you are called to be. You are experiencing the presence of God in the context of worship." That matters. And I firmly believe that. I just think that there is something to what happens when you've got worship that's well prepared.

Adam Hamilton: A lot of times we prepare worship in churches. We can prepare worship in churches like it's a fast food meal or like it's a TV dinner, some people don't even know what those are anymore. Something that is not very nutritious. It's like a snack. If your worship is like a snack, then people probably don't need to come very often. If your worship has some spiritual nourishment, if it's nourishing to the soul then people are gonna grow by virtue of being there. And I think that's our aim is. We don't always hit that. But that's our aim.

Carey Nieuwhof: I don't know that this is gonna be an answerable question or not, but I'm thinking about the leader out there listening who is saying, "Okay, great. We have blended worship. We do some traditional. We have a solid theology. It sounds an awful lot like our church. We have very similar forms. A very similar approach. We've not thrown the baby out with the bath water. Adam, tell me where are the 10,000 people? How come we are stuck? How come we are declining?" Is there anything else because I'm sure you get that. You are in a denomination where there are literally hundreds maybe thousands of congregation doing a similar approach to what you are doing, and not seeing

those results where genuine unconvinced people are becoming followers of Jesus. Is there something else in the air? I'm just curious how you would answer that.

Adam Hamilton: I think there is hundreds of small things. It's a lot of small things, and part of it is also ... Clearly we've been very fortunate, and we built this critical mass that comes along the way and you get enough people talking. We've experienced seasons of decline here at Resurrection. We've known both of those things. I have to tell you, being a pastor today and trying to develop a church and grow a church, which ultimately, hopefully we are really not as concerned about growing a church as we are about growing people and drawing them to Christ and forming Christian community.

Adam Hamilton: The church matters. It was Jesus' idea and so it's hard. It is hard. There have been seasons where I'm like, "What am I doing wrong? Do we need a new pastor here? Why are we not growing right now? What is ... Is it my preaching, is it my persona? We tend to internalize that, and assume that it's all ... As pastors, I think in particular we feel like if I were better, if only I were trying harder, if only I knew the secret magic stuff we'd be growing."

Adam Hamilton: The reality today is that most churches are not growing. We are living in a time, a cultural time where ... I don't see this reversing any time soon, where it is ... There are more competing demands for our attention. It is not self evident to people that if I go to church I'm gonna get something out of it, that it's gonna be value added. That's how people ... It's a consumeristic orientation that says, "I need to know that there is value."

Adam Hamilton: If I go to a church and the music is bad, or it doesn't speak to me or I don't understand it, or the sermon was over my head or didn't seem to move me in anyway, why would I give that hour and fifteen minutes to that when I can be walking and listening to a book on audible or my favorite podcast while I'm jogging or whatever it might be. We are ... I think the positive thing about this is it forces us to constantly be asking, "Is there some better way that we could be reaching these people? We know who our audience is. What's it gonna take to connect with them?" I've enjoyed it as a United Methodist pastor, I've had District of Assemblies of God churches say, "Would you please come teach us how to do this?" I'm like, "This is fun."

Carey Nieuwhof: Flip.

Adam Hamilton: Yeah.

Adam Hamilton: Then your church is, and another church is like, "Please tell us how this is working." I will say there are a few other things that are just nuts and bolts, things we talk about. A handful of things I'd mention, because I teach on this all the time. One of those is excellent follow up. If we have a first time visitor we are gonna follow up with them in an excellent way. We are going to ... Whether

that's the children in the nurseries and Sunday school, or whether that's a person in worship.

Adam Hamilton: These all sound gimmicky but I will tell you we've done it from the very beginning. First time visitor shows up on Sunday, Sunday afternoon somebody is on their doorstep with a coffee mug that says, "Hey, we are really glad you came in. We just want to say thank you for coming. We really hope you come again." They are gonna get a note from somebody that week. We don't go to their door and say, "If you were to die tonight you aren't going to heaven." It's like, "Hey, we are really glad you came."

Carey Nieuwhof: That's interesting. Can I just interrupt for a second?

Adam Hamilton: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: You are the second leader, and I've done so many interviews in the last few weeks. I'm trying to remember who it was. Listeners will correct me in the comments, and the show notes. You are the second leader of a large growing church who says, "I know this sounds weird. I know this does not sound 2018. If you are at a church Sunday morning we are knocking at your door by one or two o'clock in the afternoon." That's interesting, do you get pushback to that?

Adam Hamilton: None. I have not had any pushback any ... Although I get pushback from those pastors who are, like, "not how it works today". I'm like, okay.

Carey Nieuwhof: You've been doing that ... Was that something you almost started with 20 years ago?

Adam Hamilton: Yeah. Day one. Starting day one ... I would ... I did all the mug deliveries to begin with. Today we'll have 40 families visit on a given weekend on all of our different campuses, and so I can't do all those. In fact I do it once a year, Christmas time, just so I can keep my fingers in it. It's dreadful to think about ... I would like, "I hope they are not home." Then when you are standing at the door, and say, "Don't worry. I don't want to come. I just wanted to tell you, we are so glad you came today. This coffee mug is our welcome. Here is a little information about the church. Do you have any questions?"

Adam Hamilton: If they say no, we say, "Great. Listen. We hope you come back again." In the early years when they did come back I could call them by name on the second Sunday. If I could call somebody by name on the second Sunday they were gonna join. One of the things I tell pastors is, people don't become Christians primarily because of our superior theological arguments. They become Christians because we took the time to care, and they felt a care from us, and that led them to go, "Maybe the stuff they are saying might be true."

Adam Hamilton: It's about people, and this is one of the principles I tell people, it's all about people. Ministry is all about people, connecting, it's all about people. We got to

figure out how do we improve our EQ, our skills with people, listening to them, caring for them? That follow up is one of those things.

Carey Nieuwhof: I just wonder Adam whether people are so lonely and so isolated today. Whether that is ... I can't believe you did it, you did that. I was listening to a podcast the other day and I think it was Seth Godin was saying that somebody had a loss in their family and the customer service agent at Zappos, the online shoe retailer, sent flowers. Reduce that person to tears. It wasn't about the flowers, it was about I can't believe some corporation, somebody in that customer service department cared enough to mark my grief and mark that moment.

Adam Hamilton: That's a great example Carey, because people today ... This is I find ... People are longing for somebody to notice. They are longing to feel like they are a human being in a very disconnected society. When you surprise them ... Again it's the graciousness, it's not somebody going to the door to come tell you about Jesus, because you were the one on Sunday. It's just somebody saying, "We are really glad you came. We care. We noticed you were here." What surprised them when we were small, over and over again I would deliver a coffee mug to someone and they'd say, "You are the first pastor to follow up. We've visited seven churches. You are the first pastor to follow up with us." I'm like wow.

Adam Hamilton: Today people are like, "We can't believe in a church this big. That somebody actually showed up." Our aim is to try and figure out, how do we take this big church and make it feel small? That people thing is a big part of it.

Carey Nieuwhof: Can I ask you another question?

Adam Hamilton: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's really interesting in getting to where we are in a cultural moment. I've done a bit of writing on it in my blog, but this whole tension between eminence and transcendence. The character of God, God himself is both imminent and transcendent, imminent being near transcendent being so much bigger. You got to leave the room. God's presence is here. We are all gonna die. I find worship tends to be rather binary. It's either all transcendent or it's all imminent, it's all very practical, five steps, five bullet points, it's all understandable.

Carey Nieuwhof: I wonder if in that traditional, you've got the two services going on down the hall at the same time. Do you see even in the younger generation a desire for the transcendent?

Adam Hamilton: Absolutely. When people talk about being spiritual and not religious. There is something they are thinking about the transcendence of God. They feel it on the mountain, they feel it when they look up at the stars at night or whatever. This is one of the places ... I'm gonna mention ... I absolutely think this is what the people are longing for, an encounter with the holy, an encounter with the

transcendent God, while at the same time the nearness and the connection with a God that's personal and knows me by name, and cares about me.

Adam Hamilton: One of the things that we ... I believe that often we have thrown out the tools that we have for experiencing the transcendence of God. One of those is architecture. We've become very utilitarian in the last ... In America at least, I don't know in Canada, but in America-

Carey Nieuwhof: Similar.

Adam Hamilton: Very utilitarian on building boxes, and dark boxes. You can with a dark box, using lighting, create a sense of mystery in the transcendence. That can work, but often we've missed what sacred architecture can do. When we built our permanent sanctuary, we opened it in 2017, we said we wanted a building that is a sermon in our architecture. We want this building to preach, we want, before a word is spoken, or a note has played on an instrument for people to be in awe, or to feel a sense of a God who is bigger than we are, and to hear the story. Again, the stain glass I know your listeners maybe can go look it up online.

Adam Hamilton: It tells the story and I said, I wanna know that people can come in here and they can hear the gospel in silence. Architecture is a part of that, so is music. Two weeks ago when we kicked off this 11 o'clock contemporary service, I went down for the beginning of that ... And even there we are adding symbolic elements. We have acolytes lighting the candles, they are carrying the banners, even in the modern service. I was in the modern service and it was awesome, modern, beautiful music and darkness, and lights, all this kind of thing. And I was like, "That's so great."

Adam Hamilton: I walked down the hallway into the back entrance to our main sanctuary and the orchestra was playing and the choir and the congregation was singing this beautiful, Holy Holy Holy I think it was. I walk in and I'm like, "Dang, I love the fact that we've got these two there." Two totally different experiences, but both are aiming at trying to get at both transcendence and imminence, both the God who is so awesome and so holy that all you can do is bow down before God in awe, and a God who knows our names, and cares deeply for us.

Adam Hamilton: I think good worship planning is important to that. Art and architecture is important to that. Even if you've got a black box and it's lighting and other things that we do, banners, and other things we can do to foster a sense of that as well with the arts.

Carey Nieuwhof: I was with some church leaders with Arc, and Chris Hodges' organization. They were showing me some pictures from Hillsong Norway. That was just exactly what you said. I think it was an old cathedral, but they lit it up, with transcendent lighting. It would be interesting, and if you can't do it I understand, but we do show notes for these. Is it possible to get a picture of that stain glass window in your main auditorium?

Adam Hamilton: Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof: We will actually put those right in the show notes so you can see it.

Adam Hamilton: Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof: That would be a good example. That would be great. Thank you.

Adam Hamilton: Sure.

Carey Nieuwhof: There are so many places. Here is a question I want to ask, a lot of churches would say they are stuck in maintenance mode. Even though you have both the best of today and updated tradition that seems to really be connecting. I would say it doesn't sound to me like you are in maintenance mode at all. You are very much on mission, you are moving forward. Why do you think it is, because you have the opportunity like other leaders do to build into the wider church and to speak into the wider church. Why do you think so many churches get stuck in maintenance mode?

Adam Hamilton: It is so easy to get stuck. It's amazing to me that 28 years as a congregation and I find myself this way like, there'd be an area of ministry that felt like that's not going very well. I think I don't have the energy to do anything about that right now.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yes.

Adam Hamilton: Or I'll bring in the staff who are over that, and they give me their reasons why instead of being a jerk and saying no that's not acceptable. This has to change. I'm gonna give you this amount of time, and if you can't change it by that amount of time, then we need to do something different. It's just so easy to let things slide. You let them slide long enough, and we've done that here. We've had seasons where I'm like, I have dropped the ball. I let things go for a while, and then you get this feeling, the sick feeling in the pit of your stomach like, "I know this isn't right. I just I'm too worn out to do anything about it."

Adam Hamilton: I think we all get burned out, times we all get just tired. This year we are reinventing a number of things in the congregation, because our small group attendance had dropped dramatically over the last four or five years. I let that happen. I would preach about it, we would try to do some things. I'd see a little bit of some positive happening, but I could still tell, we are sucking at this. We are not doing ... We used to do this pretty well, we are just not doing it. I would expect excuses, to hear from staff people or whatever. I don't think they meant them as excuses, they were legitimate reasons why things were the way they were.

Adam Hamilton: We finally said, "This is not okay. We are gonna do something." I'm teaching tonight, my wife and I have a class on marriage. We've never done this before,

but I've written about it, and I've preached about it, but we are teaching this thing to launch a new family night, to get families out for small groups. I've been preaching into this, we hired a consultant to come in and look and see, what's going really well and what's not going so well? One of the actual facts are the number of people in small groups.

Adam Hamilton: You got to work at it. If you are resting on your laurels, you can't stand still. There are things we start that we need to quit, but we don't quit them, because there is a number of people who love them the way they are. So you keep doing them, because you don't want to make people mad. This is the other thing I find is over time, we become so ... We as pastors become risk averse, and change averse. We don't wanna make changes because we know it's gonna make some people mad. We've been hurt enough times by the emails that were sent to us, or the people who stomped out of the church or left. We don't want to do that again. We don't to intentionally cause that. We let it go.

Adam Hamilton: With all the best intentions we are not keeping the ball moving forward. I've done this many many times, and I thought to myself, and I started this church, and if I'm afraid to make changes, because I know I don't wanna pay the price, what does that mean for the average guy who has gone to church that's been there for 100 years already? Then I think another piece to this is visioning for the future. Right now we are doing a 12 year ... This year we are devoted to looking at where do we think God is calling us to be by the year 2030?

Adam Hamilton: Usually we do one, or two or three year strategic plans, but we said, "What if God had some really big things it would take 12 years to do, what would they be?" I find again that visioning excites people ... We started looking at who are we really? What are our defining characteristics? Revisiting our purpose, all these things. And then being able to say, "What is that?" We've been using the word moonshot. What's the moonshot that God is calling us to do?

Adam Hamilton: I feel an excitement around this place I haven't felt in quite a long time. You know I've been through those seasons where we lose that energy and passion and excitement. It's true of marriage or anything else.

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah. You are always reinventing. That's the thing. You planted this church, but that was almost three decades ago. You probably ... You are on iteration 3.0, 4.0, 5.0 or whatever of Resurrection. As you've changed, because I've been in this long enough as well, not quite as long, but you've got to reinvent yourself every few years. Not only personally as a leader, but congregationally to stay fresh.

Carey Nieuwhof: Every time you do most leaders run into opposition. Have you encountered as you've sought to change Resurrection. Have you encountered opposition from within? If so, what was it like and how did you handle it?

Adam Hamilton: That's gonna be a regular occurrence is opposition. If you are preaching anything worth preaching. There is gonna be some of your sermons where people are gonna get mad, or they are gonna be offended by what you said. My aim is not to offend for the sake of offending. I want to figure out how to influence people not just irritate them. It's easy to irritate, it's harder to influence.

Carey Nieuwhof: That is good. You wanna influence people not irritate them.

Adam Hamilton: Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof: Don't miss that leaders. That's really good.

Adam Hamilton: Irritating is a side product of influencing sometimes, but if people just leave and they don't come back, then you didn't influence them. They just left. Regularly we have people who leave the church over something. It's painful. We try to be gracious, but that will happen. I'll tell you there have been several seasons. Right now we are in the process of making some changes to our evening worship services. We are actually, I believe we are gonna call it evening song, which comes out of a 1500 year old tradition of the church, and change this evening sort of slightly.

Adam Hamilton: That's gonna be a change for some of our musicians, and for the choir that we had there, and changing their style. There are some of them who, I think probably are not happy about the fact that we are looking at changes. We did this to the nine o'clock service several years ago, where people were really upset because we made a change. I said, "We look. If we are gonna reach new generations of people we have to have at least one service on Sunday morning in the sanctuary that's gonna be modern, not just the traditional.

Adam Hamilton: That was painful. Sometimes you make those changes and you realize you made a mistake, and you got to go, "You know what? I'm sorry. We tried this. It didn't work." A lot of times we don't let things ride long enough to see them through. We just cave into the criticism. When you cave to the criticism then you end up stuck. I'll also say there is times where ... You and I talked before the show about the conflicts within the United Methodist Church today, and most mainline churches today related to same sex marriage, and how we read the Bible related to same sex marriage.

Adam Hamilton: My own denomination next February is gonna be having a powwow and I don't know how the vote's gonna go. Maybe we won't vote to change anything. I have a feeling we just can't get 800 people to agree to vote on anything. This question is one that divides congregations today. I preached on this, I think it was 2004 when our church was debating it in that year. My own views had shifted, and I shared in a sermon, how I understood both scripture and how the heart of God might speak to this.

Adam Hamilton: I'm trying to remember. It was 800 people I think left the church that year. It was the most painful thing I've ever walked through in ministry. I questioned myself, did I miss God's will, did I fail you God? I'm not proud of the depression, I spent a year in a funk, and wondering if I needed to go somewhere else, or leave. I was getting job offers that time to go be president of a seminary or go here or there, whatever. I remember my wife said to me, in the middle of it she said, I told her, I said, "Do you mind if we do something else? I can't do this for 20 more years. This hurts too much."

Adam Hamilton: She said, "Well, I'll go with you anywhere you feel God's calling." She said, "I just have one question for you. Is God calling you to leave or are you running away?" I realized when I was thinking about leaving I was ... God wasn't calling me to leave, I was running away. It was too painful. I hung in there. I'd go to church. People would say, "How are you doing pastor?" "I'm doing great." You fake it. You just keep-

Carey Nieuwhof: Cognitive dissonance.

Adam Hamilton: Yeah. I found ... It was probably a year and three months later, I woke up one day and I didn't feel depressed anymore. I still felt shaken by the experience. I looked back and we lost 800 people and 1000 people joined. It's not about how many people join or leave. I just saw that God was calling some people to be at our church precisely because of the message I had preached, whereas other people said that's not who, I can't be in that church.

Adam Hamilton: Those kind of issues, you try to avoid those. A lot of pastors are conflict avoiders or people pleasers. We don't want to have people dislike us. There are gonna be times that you are gonna preach, and you are gonna try to lead your people, and you are gonna do it with gentleness and kindness and compassion, and at the same time not everybody is gonna make that journey, no matter what it is. Whether it's shifting worship styles or it's whatever. In America today Trump is another one of those big pieces of how do you respond to Donald Trump?

Adam Hamilton: I was listening this morning to NPR, Robert Jeffress out of Dallas talking about the evangelicals who care championing Trump. Then you've got other evangelicals, and most mainline Christians who at best scratch their head sometimes, maybe I like this policy, we are grateful for the tax reduction, but I don't think that's right. This doesn't feel ... I've got folks ... I have folks who say, "You are being too political. You are talking too much about these things." You are hinting at things I can tell. I have other people like, "Why aren't you saying anything?" In the same congregation.

Carey Nieuwhof: I get ... Do you have a rule of thumb or some guidelines that you've developed to help you figure out when you need to listen to the opposition. Okay, it's time for me to back off. I made a mistake. I need to apologize, or when you are like, no, this is the right thing to do. Whether that's theological or whether it's honestly just changing a service or saying no more choir or no more band, no more this, or no more that. Changing the color of the carpet. How do you know

that the opposition is like "you guys are right, I'm wrong. We are gonna change", or like, "No, I think I just got to plow through this one."

Adam Hamilton: I think being careful about why are we doing this is really important. Then honestly listening to the opposition and go, "Okay, do they have any valid points here?" I just stood before a group of folks a few weeks ago who were upset about a potential change that was being contemplated. I said, "I just came to listen. Share with me what you are feeling." I listened to them, and they had some good points to make.

Adam Hamilton: I said, "Well, you know, we are gonna think about this more. I appreciate you sharing this with us." There are other times where I'm like, "Guys, here is the reason why ... I hear what you are saying and I love you so much. I want you to know that. I'm gonna ask you just to go with me on this for a while. If we are wrong we'll change it back." I had this happen, we had Steven ministry, are you familiar with this?

Carey Nieuwhof: Yeah.

Adam Hamilton: We had Steven ministry for many years, a great ministry of empowering, training and empowering people to do congregational care. We felt like we needed to change models. I needed something that was, it's more reactive and I needed something where people, they didn't wait to be called. We'd send people out to the hospitals. We have a team of about 150 people, lay ministers, they'd go to to the hospitals, they show up at funerals, they are calling people in response to prayer request cards, they are doing all kinds of amazing stuff.

Adam Hamilton: Our student ministry wasn't really designed for that. I went to our Steven ministry and I said, "We wanna change the model. I know this is painful. I want you all to come with us on this journey." They devoted hundreds of hours to this program, and they'd been a part of it of years, and they were mad. Some of them, they were just angry, and I'm like, "Guys, I love you. What you are doing really matters. I'm gonna ask you. Would you give me just a year to try this? I really think a year from now you all will go, "Wow, this is awesome." I understand. I could be wrong, and if in a year from now this isn't working I'm gonna back here and beg for your forgiveness. We are gonna go right back to what we were doing before. But for this year could we try this?"

Adam Hamilton: A year later they were like, "You were right. This is awesome. This helped us." There is a variety of ways that we do that, but it's carefully listening to the opposition but at the same time going okay, this is why we are doing this. We think this is right. Nobody gets it right all the time either.

Carey Nieuwhof: No.

Adam Hamilton: There have been decisions we've made where I've I've had to go back and apologize for them later and say, "You know, I think we got it wrong there."

Carey Nieuwhof: This is an audio podcast, but if you guys could see Adam's face while he's explaining this to me, you would see empathy, you would see compassion, you would see concern. And I think a genuineness that probably really really helps in a conflicted situation. Because sometimes we commit and we say the words, but the body language is like nope, I'm closed. I'm just doing this to make you feel good. I hope you caught it in his voice, because it seemed very evident.

Carey Nieuwhof: We talked a little bit about why congregations struggle. Just denominational leaders, mainline and evangelical, of every stripe listening in right now, why do you think so many denominations of every stripe are struggling today? Any thoughts on that?

Adam Hamilton: I think denominations are a macrocosm of the local church. You talk about how we get stuck as local church is we are resistant to change, we are afraid, risk averse, so we get stuck. And that's what happens with denominations. Denominations is even harder because when it comes to leading change in a denomination, you've got denominational officials who have no real authority or power over the congregations or the people.

Adam Hamilton: It's easy for us to blame the denomination, and the denominational officials. In the Methodist church we love blaming the general boards and agencies of our denomination. They are just sucking money out of us. The bishops don't know what they are doing. the seminarians are ... It's great for us to point our finger to everybody else. They are all just people. In our case when it comes to at least policy changes, we meet once every four years with 800 delegates from around the world.

Adam Hamilton: We try to do Christian ethics by vote. It's just ... It's a recipe for disaster. Nobody would lead an organization that way. And so I think organizations get stuck, I think about, what's his name who wrote Leading Change from Harvard.

Carey Nieuwhof: John Kotter.

Adam Hamilton: John Kotter. His talk about ... He used to say the average American corporation is over-managed and under-led. I think I want to ask United Methodist, what do you think? It's clear most United Methodists think our denomination is over-managed and under-led. Leadership, we are not giving so much of the inspiration and the vision casting and aligning resources to accomplish goals. Instead we are spending a lot more time rewriting the rules. That's not very inspiring, and it's not very ... We need to free people up instead of imposing more rules on them.

Carey Nieuwhof: What would you say to pastors who might be articulating some of those frustrations that you've just shared? How should they handle their frustration with their denomination, any advice?

Adam Hamilton: When we started Resurrection, my aim was to ... I thought the only way ... My dream was, I wanted to be a part of revitalizing the United Methodist Church. I thought that from the time I joined when I was 19. I thought this church has already been in decline for 19 years. I wanna be a part of revitalizing it. I thought, if you think back how on how to influence people? Dale Carnegie, right? You don't influence people by picking at them and criticizing them all the time. You influence people by modeling genuine empathy and compassion by listening to them, by encouraging the good things they are doing.

Adam Hamilton: That's what we try to do as a church. I would say if you are in a denomination you are frustrated, part of what you have to ask is what's the strategy for bringing change? The strategy for bringing change I found wasn't criticizing other people, it was getting involved. It was rolling my sleeves and showing I was committed and I cared, and I cared about other people, and I cared about my district superintendent, my bishop.

Adam Hamilton: We have what I call the portions in the United Methodist Church. This is ... For our congregation it's about 10% of your operating budget. So it's about \$2.4 million, our budget is about 24,000,000 or 25,000,000. \$2.4 million we give to the denomination. And it's used for mission and all these other things. When we started the church it was nothing. It was like \$10,000 or something. We said, and you typically pay it every month throughout the year.

Adam Hamilton: We said, "Let's pay it upfront in advance at the beginning of the year. I wonder what influence we would have if we paid that upfront." We said, "We care enough about the denomination. We are gonna pre-fund this." It may sound silly or like a strange thing, at least for the ... There was nobody who didn't get the message that we were committed to the denomination.

Carey Nieuwhof: They heard it.

Adam Hamilton: Yeah. They heard it. We care about this. Instead of badmouthing it, we are gonna be positively speaking about our colleagues, and about our denomination, and then we are gonna look for ways to model what excellent ministry looks like in the United Methodist traditions. People come to our ... We do a leadership institute, and most of the folks who come are United Methodists. We have about 2000 pastors and church leaders every year.

Adam Hamilton: When they come we are just trying to show them, here is what it can look like in a United Methodist Church. Here is what we are proud of. When I speak across the country to United Methodist conferences and when I speak I end by saying, "I want you to know why I'm a United Methodist, and what it is that makes my heart sing about this church. Not that we are better than anybody else, just that these are," when I'm finished inevitably they are on their feet in applause and it's like, "Yes, that's why I'm a United Methodist too." They've kind of forgotten that in the grind of what's going on.

Adam Hamilton: I think what we need is people to help us remember this is what's special about who you are, regardless of your denomination. I find local churches need their pastors to remind them, this is what's special about you. This is why I'm so proud to be your pastor. This is why I ... I love this about you. As you do that people feel that sense of, "You know what? There is something God is doing here. We are special." A lot of churches I find are low morale churches right now.

Adam Hamilton: As they've declined, and as maybe some other church down the road is doing better, or they see the big mega churches doing something. Part of our job is to help build morale in those congregations to say, "You know what? God is using us, and we matter to God. We can make a difference in the world." I think that's part of the role of the leader is to help the local church believe in itself. I think part of our role is to lead up for our pastors and our denomination. We lead up by encouraging those who are ahead of us, who are overseeing us. And we look for ways to model a better way.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's an impressive attitude to have 28 years in. Adam, what are some ways that you've kept yourself fresh over the years. Your heart alive, engaged, you've talked about seasonality, and even that really tough year where maybe you slid into depression, but it takes an awful lot of stamina to do this decade after decade.

Adam Hamilton: It does. I think perseverance is one of the factors or one of the keys to leaders who make a difference over the long haul, because all of us feel like ... I think about Moses praying, "Please kill me now God. I don't wanna do this anymore."

Carey Nieuwhof: I may have prayed that prayer at some point over the years.

Adam Hamilton: We all feel that way sometimes. And sometimes you are in one of those situations. That is a sign you need to step back. You need to do something different. Sometimes it's not, it's just like you got to put your shoes back on and go again. For me, I would say reading helps, sabbatical leaves. Our church has this sabbatical policy, once I finish six or seven years it's generally six, I usually do it at seven years. At seven years then I have two or three months off to go study and renew and I've taken three sabbatical leaves. That's been hugely helpful.

Adam Hamilton: I'm trying to figure out ... One of the things that re-energize me. One of the things I love to do is I love to travel and to prepare sermons in location. I did a series of sermons on John Wesley. I preached, and I filmed various b-roll clips from England, and I went into the places of his life and the biblical grounding for it.

Adam Hamilton: I've done this series on Jesus, three different series on Jesus, where I preached in the Holy Land. Some of the sermons I actually preached from the Holy Land, uploaded them and then I did the journeys of Paul across Europe. I did Martin

Luther for the 500th anniversary of the reaffirmation. I preached two sermons from Germany to our people. We went to follow Martin Luther's life. That was energizing for me.

Adam Hamilton: I knew of all these places, but I'd never been there. I did a series on Moses when I went to Egypt. I preached from Africa via video. Most of the times we film there and then I come back and preach it with b-roll. I'm energized ... I'm leaving in a month with a rabbi friend of mine to go to Israel, and we are gonna be filming a series on King David. He and I are gonna preach three sermons from the Holy Land back to our congregations. And the same sermon that's going to the synagogue, is coming to our congregation. It's gonna be a really interesting cool deal.

Adam Hamilton: I'm pretty fired up about that. There is that kind of stuff. There is reading. I think I pray more than I've ever prayed. I think I read scripture more than I've read scripture. I walk, I'm trying to exercise more, and exercising and praying and I'll walk. I think all those things. Then I have a granddaughter, that's renewed my faith.

Carey Nieuwhof: You have a granddaughter. That's awesome. That's exhausting and exhilarating at the same time, right?

Adam Hamilton: It's awesome.

Carey Nieuwhof: What do the first few hours of your day look like?

Adam Hamilton: I start on my knees, just a short time of prayer. I'll pray for maybe five or ten minutes on my knees next to my bed. I'll take the time to read scripture for a little while, another maybe five or ten minutes, not a long drawn out devotional time. I wish I had more of that. Depending on the day of the week, I'm either in my office or in a meeting or at home. I work in my home study.

Adam Hamilton: Tuesdays, Wednesdays are sermon writing and worship planning. I'm reading and researching all day on Tuesday. Wednesday I'm writing the first draft. And I'm in worship meetings, evening meetings, Wednesday, Thursdays I'm in meetings all day long. Before I go to bed at night I'm back in prayer. I pray four, or five times throughout the day. I'm not a "spend two hours praying". I might take a 40 minute walk, and I'll pray for 20 minutes of that maybe.

Carey Nieuwhof: Everyone's got their own thing that's renewing for you right?

Adam Hamilton: Yeah. It is. I'm gonna turn the computer around and you can see my desk here. Let's see if I can ... This is this week's sermon, this is the mess, there is your picture over there on my desk.

Carey Nieuwhof: Your briefing notes.

Adam Hamilton: My briefing notes.

Adam Hamilton: Anyway, I can't tell you that I have this, other than what I just described, a really deep devotional ... It's more just the rhythm of my life.

Carey Nieuwhof: Is that an Apple tube behind you?

Adam Hamilton: No, that's my first Mac 512.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's a Mac 512.

Adam Hamilton: Yeah. I bought it ... Let's see, when did it buy it? 1985, late 1985 and it still runs.

Carey Nieuwhof: This should be a video podcast. We will not disclose your location or it may disappear. There'll be some listener who is like, "I want that." That's amazing, what year is that?

Adam Hamilton: That was built in 1984, late 84. I bought it used in 85. I've got an Apple Lisa over here on another table. The Apple Lisa was the predecessor to the Mac, and it sold for \$10,000 the year it came it out in 1982. Then I've got ... I'm looking at from where I'm sitting about 10 different Apple computers that I have throughout my library shelves. Different Macs, either I own that were ... I'm a collector of these things, or that I bought on eBay. I've got almost every iPhone, all the iPad, the Apple Newton.

Carey Nieuwhof: You've got it all. That's a hobby. That's a passion of yours?

Adam Hamilton: Exactly.

Carey Nieuwhof: Isn't that fascinating?

Adam Hamilton: This 512 is for me a model of where we are as a church. In fact, I take it out when I'm speaking here at the church and say, "This computer will still run Microsoft Word Version 1.0. It takes 10 minutes to boot up and it can do very little compared to what the new computers can do.

Adam Hamilton: This computer is not that old. So it's 33 years old. The average church hasn't been remodeled in 30 years. The average church's worship hasn't changed in 30 years. I ask people if Apple were, when they made this it was the best thing since ice cream. Imagine if Apple just said, "We just made the coolest thing ever. We are never gonna change it." Apple wouldn't be in business today. Instead they are constantly generating new ideas. They are constantly looking at how do they change? Likewise for church we've got to be able to constantly be asking ... We are not changing the gospel but how does it speak to the world today and how do we speak it to the world today? How do we do ministry in a changing society and world?

Carey Nieuwhof: That's a great analogy. I'm gonna ask one more nerdy question. Is that the original video iPod from 2004?

Adam Hamilton: No, it's not. I wish i had-

Carey Nieuwhof: What is that?

Adam Hamilton: This is ... Let me see. This one was from 2005. It would have been the next generation.

Carey Nieuwhof: Next generation.

Adam Hamilton: It's pretty close.

Carey Nieuwhof: Was that the one that came preloaded with Vertigo?

Adam Hamilton: Yeah. That was a couple of generations after that one.

Carey Nieuwhof: You know more about that than I do. That's good. What do you do for hobbies, for fun? Travel, collect computers-

Adam Hamilton: I love to travel. I collect baseball cards too but I don't really focus a lot on that. I just every once in a while play with that. My wife and I live up 13 acres out in the country and I have a John Deere tractor, old 1964 3020 tractor, a pretty big tractor and I just play on that. We have motorcycles. My wife and I ride motorcycles. Most of the time right now it's our granddaughter. She is four, and she is just such an important part of our lives, and I can't imagine not having her around.

Adam Hamilton: Most of the time, or at least a couple of times in a month, actually now it's about every week, we see her at least one day, and that's awesome. We go to the theater and movies. I go out with friends.

Carey Nieuwhof: Adam. This all have been so much fun. If you have one piece of advice to give a leader who feels like they are staring up a very long mountain and a big climb ahead, what would you say to them?

Adam Hamilton: I would say a couple of things, don't give up and figure out what really matters to you. What is it that you feel so strongly about? You feel so passionate about that you would be willing to give up everything else for it? For me it was our purpose statement of building a Christian community for the disconnected, the nonreligious and nominally religious, and helping them find Christ. That makes my heart beat, and I'm willing to do whatever I need to do to try to make that happen. Figuring out, "what is the thing"?

Adam Hamilton: We had this consultant study us this last year and they said, "There are four things about you as a congregation that seem to stand out." They were four

things ... They got it right and they captured it. We are a congregation that is outwardly focused on trying to connect with nonreligious people but also trying to serve the poor and help Kansas City look like the kingdom of God. They said, "You are intellectually provocative." Not provocative, they said, "You provoke thought." You are challenging people to think and to engage their intellects and when it comes to their faith and how they read the Bible.

Adam Hamilton: You are bridge building. You are constantly looking at ways to bring the left and the right together, and to build bridges instead of walls. Everything you do it seems like it just pours out, and you radiate hope. You have this idea that ... We talk about this a lot, the worst thing is never the last thing, and that the Resurrection says there is always hope. When they said those four things I thought, they just nailed us. In part that is who I am. And so figuring out who are you, not who do you wish you were ... What is it that makes your heart beat faster? How are you wired?

Adam Hamilton: Then figuring out, what has God called me to do with that? I think once you can live into who you are wired to be, and then you can own that. And you can say, "You know what? That's who I am." If you are somebody who needs ... If that doesn't work for you, it's okay. That's who God has wired me to be. God doesn't need everybody to be like me. That's who I am, and that's who this church is. For our congregation we named these in a sermon a few weeks ago, we did a poll with their cellphones where they could vote.

Adam Hamilton: I said, "Just tell me, which of these four do you think best connects with you?" 80 to 90% voted for all four of them. Everyone ... And when they left they were like, "Yeah, that is who we are." I said, "That's your elevator's speech. That's what you've got," when somebody says, "What is the Church of the Resurrection like?" We are people who try to follow Jesus, and we are outwardly focused, and we are thought provoking, and we are bridge building, and we are radiating hope.

Adam Hamilton: If you can figure out what your elevator's speech is about who you are, or what makes your heart beat faster and then you can live into that unapologetically, I think that's a good thing.

Carey Nieuwhof: That's a good word.

Carey Nieuwhof: We'll have all the links to everything we talked about in the show notes. If people wanna go direct to find you, or Church of the Resurrection online. What are some good websites to do that?

Adam Hamilton: Yes, cor.org for Church of the Resurrection, cor.org is our main website. On Facebook I'm at Pastor Adam Hamilton, and because there is inevitably fake Facebook people out there every week posting fake accounts in my name. It's an organizational webpage, there'll be 40,000 plus followers. Look for that one and not the fake ones. Then on Twitter I'm @RevAdamHamilton. Then I have my

own personal blog adamhamilton.org. Any of those would be great places to find more or to find out more about what we are doing.

Carey Nieuwhof: Adam. Thank you so much for spending some time with us today.

Adam Hamilton: It was great to be with you today. Thanks for having me.

Carey Nieuwhof: I so enjoyed it. And actually seeing his Apple collection, his computer collection, pretty impressive. Do you have a hobby? What do you do for fun? Do you know that's a major issue? Max Lucado talked about that a couple of weeks ago on the podcast, where he went to see his doctor and his doctor said, "You don't do anything in your life that doesn't count. You need to do something that doesn't count." He took up golf. I took up barbecue, boating, bicycling, just sticking with the Bs, never got to C. Adam collects computers, what do you do?

Carey Nieuwhof: That's part of nurturing your soul. Pardon the extended introduction today but I think this stuff is really important. If you are a young leader, the more you do that now, it's kind of like putting money in the bank. You put a dollar in the bank now you are like, "It's a dollar and two next year." Over time that really really accumulates with interest, same thing with your character."

Carey Nieuwhof: Anyway, here endeth today's sermon. We are back next week with a fresh episode. I'm so excited to be welcoming two guests next week Craig Groeschel is back, and we are gonna talk about Hope In The Dark. That book has been helping so so many people. That's next week. Next Tuesday Terry Smith is with us, and he talks about creating a hospitable culture at your church, or in your organization.

Carey Nieuwhof: Here is an excerpt from that episode.

Terry Smith: There are certain types of leaders who lived and live beautiful lives. You look at Eugene Peterson, he's big on this idea of finding pleasure in life, but then you look at other leaders that I referenced in the hospital leader in this regard, C.S Lewis, or Dietrich Bonhoeffer. These guys knew how to have fun, they knew how to enjoy a meal, they knew how to build friendships. They enjoy the good and beautiful things of this world. Jesus, the holiest man who ever lived, said that he came enjoying life. I think we can do the most serious work in the world, but do it better when we have a thread of feasting in our life.

Carey Nieuwhof: Well guys, make sure to give some love to our sponsors there. One of the reasons we can do this and bring you multiple episodes a month, hopefully professionally produced. Toby does a great job. I'm doing my part. Go to pushpay.com/carey. Take advantage of their special offer. If you wanna leverage technology to reach your members beyond Sunday both in giving and engagement. Then remodelhealth.com can save you 60 to \$100,000 a year to repurpose towards ministry. Visit remodelhealth.com/carey, or you can find out more and receive a free quote, and buying guide today.

Carey Nieuwhof: Thank you so much to our partners, the people we trust. I think you are gonna be better off when you check those guys out. Next week two episodes, and a whole lot more going on. I appreciate you guys. Thanks so much for listening. I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

Announcer: You've been listening to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. Join us next time for more insights on leadership, change, and personal growth to help you lead you like never before.