

JOE RESIGNS FROM THE COUNCIL

Since Susan became the pastor of Peace Church three years ago, she was impressed with the insights and skills of one of her members, Joe, a man around 60 years old. Joe was a relatively active member. He came to adult education classes and asked really insightful questions or offered perspectives that Susan found challenging. At congregational meetings, also, his questions and comments often cut to the heart of issues, at least in Susan's judgment. It was not surprising, when Susan thought about it. After all, Joe was a senior vice-president of a local corporation, served on the boards of several community organizations, and was frequently interviewed in the media about local business issues.

At Susan's urging, Joe was approached about his willingness to serve on the Church Council. He refused. When his name came up a third time, Susan offered to approach him personally and was thrilled when he agreed to a three year term. For several months, Joe attended Council meetings and listened attentively. Once in awhile he offered a comment, but often seemed uninterested in the discussions. Susan, not knowing Joe all that well personally, just assumed he was quiet and thoughtful and learning about the work of the Council as many new Council members do at first.

Then, after Joe's sixth Council meeting, he called Susan to inform her he would be resigning from the Council. Upset and surprised, Susan nonetheless was able to think clearly enough to ask if they could have lunch to discuss his decision. At the lunch, Joe told Susan that he was more than willing to give his time to the church and his decision had nothing to do with her. It was simply that he did not have time or interest to spend hours dealing with the issues that seemed to occupy most of the Council's agenda. He had his council folder with him and he began to read down some of the agenda items from 2 or 3 recent council meetings: Who would replace the burned out lights in the parking lot? The janitor needed new mops – what kind were best and where could they be acquired for the best price? The youth group had spilled soda on the carpet in one of the church school rooms – what might be done to prevent this from happening in the future? Some weeks after an appeal for funds to help a needy church neighbor, an additional \$128 was received; what should be done with the money?

Joe indicated to Susan he just didn't have several hours a month to deal with these kinds of issues and that was the reason he was resigning. In a gentle but clear way, he strongly encouraged Susan to look at what the Council was about and what it might do differently.

WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?

IF YOU WERE PASTOR SUSAN, HOW WOULD YOU APPROACH THE ISSUE THAT JOE'S RESIGNATION RAISES?

WHAT WOULD YOU DO ABOUT JOE'S ADMONITION?