

# enrichment

enrichment



FALL 2001

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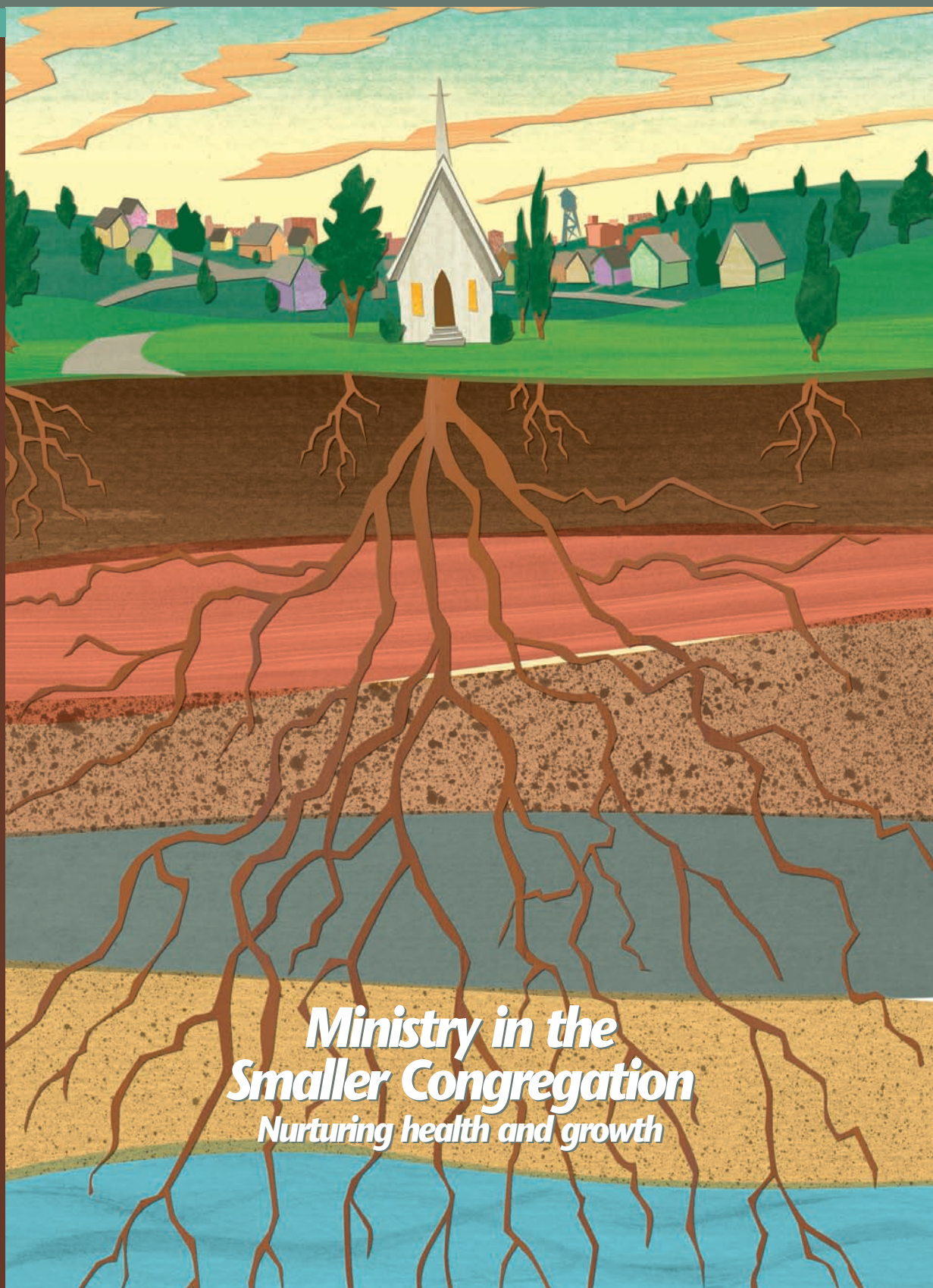
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*Recipient  
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***Ministry in the  
Smaller Congregation***  
***Nurturing health and growth***

Ministry in the Smaller Congregation

VOLUME SIX • NUMBER FOUR





# ministry matters

BY GARY R. ALLEN



## The Smaller Church

The purpose of this issue of *Enrichment* is to provide encouragement and practical helps to ministers of all churches, but especially to those who pastor smaller congregations. The term *smaller church* defines the 64 percent of our churches with an average Sunday morning worship attendance of 99 or less.

All ministers are called into the same vast harvest field. The size of your congregation does not necessarily determine its value. The real issue is the health and effectiveness of your church. A healthy church will be an effective church.

The context and community in which the church exists may create legitimate reasons why some churches remain small. However, every church can be effective in reaching its community and impacting the lives of the unchurched. When the church focuses on itself rather than the lost, it becomes self-centered, discontent, discouraged, and develops a survival mentality. When this happens, the missionizing purpose of the Heavenly Father is lost in the milieu of church busyness that produces little impact outside the four walls of the building.

Frustration and fatigue are enemies of effective ministry. We must constantly refocus on the missionizing purpose of the Father and refresh ourselves in His presence. When we, by intent or neglect, fail to be all that we can be as ministers of the gospel and do not facilitate effective ministry, then we must hold ourselves accountable. We must

determine to move forward in the strength of the Lord. We all need times of God's refreshing and renewed passion in our lives and ministry.

Three words often used interchangeably when we speak of the smaller church are *revival*, *renewal*, and *revitalization*. However, each is distinct.

Revival is about the heart. As God in His sovereignty moves toward us, and we, in the fervor of spiritual hunger, reach out to Him, that meeting of the

and personal Pentecostal power. No longer do people view the church as the place to go in times of crisis and when they are ready to straighten out their lives. Most unchurched people have never been oriented to church. It is a foreign place to them, and they are not likely to come to us.

Every church, large or small, can do something to reach its community for Christ. We must believe that every person can be reached. Things that worked

### The context and community in which the church exists may create legitimate reasons why some churches remain small.

divine and human is the supernatural reviving of our inner being.

*Renewal* is about the mind. It is the Romans 12 model of the transforming of our minds. We must intentionally think differently. We are to think more as God thinks, especially about lost humanity.

*Revitalization* is about the function and structure of ministry. How we do ministry may need to change if we are going to be more effective in our community.

Sometimes revival does not last because we are not willing to think differently and adjust the function and structure of our ministry. Encountering the freshness of God's presence and power demands that we think and behave differently.

The challenge today is to make every feasible effort to reach the unchurched with a biblical message of hope, salvation,

in the past may not work as effectively today, so we need to think outside of the box and find creative ways to present the gospel to the unchurched.

The cry of my heart is, "Lord, send a revival." I also pray that our minds will be transformed by thinking differently and that we will be willing to adjust the function and structure of the ministry of our local church.

Larger church or smaller church; that is not the issue. Some larger churches may not be healthy, so it is important that every church examine itself. Every church can be healthy, and every church can reach its community. **e**

Gary R. Allen, D.Min., is executive editor of *Enrichment Journal* and national coordinator of the Ministerial Enrichment Office, Springfield, Missouri.





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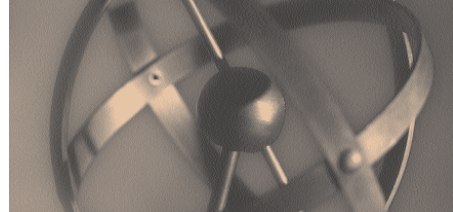
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# interview

WITH THOMAS E. TRASK



## ASK THE SUPERINTENDENT— No Little Pastors; No Little Places

**In the Early Church, the local churches were small; they met in houses. But they were healthy because they were reaching people with the gospel.**



*Sixty-four percent of Assemblies of God churches have 99 or less in Sunday morning attendance. Superintendent Thomas E. Trask acknowledges the value these pastors and congregations bring to the Assemblies of God. He realizes their size does not prevent them from becoming vibrant and healthy. He also understands the needs of these congregations and pastors because he has pastored smaller churches. In his quarterly interview, the general superintendent shares his passion and concern for the smaller church and provides encouragement and practical advice to those who are pastoring smaller congregations.*

### **HOW DOES THE STATEMENT, "A HEALTHY CHURCH IS A GROWING CHURCH," RELATE TO THE SMALLER CHURCH?**

**TRASK:** Simply because a church is smaller does not mean it is not healthy. In the Assemblies of God, we have many smaller congregations that are making tremendous contributions to this Fellowship. Collectively, they carry a large portion of the burden when it comes to foreign and home missions and the various ministries in the church.

In the Early Church, the local churches were small; they met in houses. But they were healthy because they were reaching people with the gospel. The people in the church were preaching the Word, and the fruit and gifts of the Spirit were operating in the church. God was confirming His Word with miracles.

The mission of the church, regardless of its size, is to reach people with the gospel and minister to them. A healthy and growing church is fulfilling this mission.

Some churches are in places that are not conducive to large growth because they are in areas with fewer people. These churches, however, should not become satisfied and think, *We are smaller, and we are comfortable with being smaller.* The church needs to do what Jesus said in Luke 14:23: "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

Some rural communities may not have an Assemblies of God church. Years ago our pioneers pastored in smaller communities and also started churches in



neighboring communities. Many of our pastors are doing that today. They are not comfortable with the status quo, but are finding ways to minister in communities and areas around them.

#### **WHAT ARE SOME POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF SMALLER CHURCHES?**

TRASK: In a smaller church there is a greater opportunity for *koinonia*—fellowship. This was one of the ingredients

and will hold up your hands. They will be like Aaron and Hur were to Moses.

#### **HOW CAN A SMALLER CHURCH MAINTAIN ITS EFFECTIVENESS IN THE SHADOW OF A LARGER CHURCH?**

TRASK: The larger church can offer a wide variety of ministries to the family that the smaller church cannot. Smaller-church pastors need to find

### **The mission of the church, regardless of its size, is to reach people with the gospel and minister to them.**

in the Early Church. They continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine, breaking of bread, in fellowship, and in prayer. The warmth, closeness, and caring for one another that develop in a smaller church aren't always found in a larger congregation.

Additionally, there are more opportunities for ministry in the smaller church because there are fewer people from which to draw. A smaller church has a larger percentage of its people involved in ministry than does the larger church. People need to be trained and discipled so they can grow spiritually and become involved in the ministry of the church.

#### **HOW DOES THE SMALL-CHURCH PASTOR OVERCOME DISCOURAGEMENT?**

TRASK: Many smaller-church pastors are bivocational. (See the article in this issue, "Bivocational Ministry: Legitimate Strategy or Necessary Evil?" by Chris Rainey.) I've been there. This can be a discouraging and heavy load at times. Often there is a lack of finances and personnel in the church. Consequently, the pastor performs many jobs.

As the pastor of a smaller church, it is your responsibility to not sit, sour, and sulk, but rather to utilize your gifts. Find one person to disciple and train. Reproduce yourself, and people will begin to multiply themselves. Soon you will have qualified personnel willing to serve, and you will no longer have to do it all. These people will be your encouragers

their church's niche in the community. You can't be all things to all people. God has a design for every congregation, and there is a mission for each church. Don't try to duplicate somebody else's vision. Ask, "What is God's vision for our church? How do we fit into what God wants to do in our community?" When the people in a church do this, God will show them the plan they are to fulfill instead of trying to copy another church.

#### **WHY IS PASTORAL LONGEVITY IN THE SMALLER CHURCH IMPORTANT?**

TRASK: One important thing that hurts many smaller churches is the constant turnover of pastors. When pastors stay in their church and community for a long time, they become acquainted in the community and establish the church's name and reputation in that community. They build trust, and this takes time. But it also pays dividends over a period of years. When people in the community have a crisis, even when they haven't been a part of the church, they will come to the church because of the relationships the pastor has built within the community.

It takes time for a church to become acquainted with its pastor, to know his or her gifts and skills. It also takes time for the pastor to learn about people in the church. This mutual understanding will help both the pastor and congregation to work together as a team.

#### **HOW CAN PASTORS OF SMALLER CHURCHES ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL AND NUMERICAL GROWTH IN THEIR CONGREGATIONS?**


TRASK: Spiritual and numerical growth is a work of the Spirit. If a church will fast and pray, be discipled in the Word of God, and reach out to people, numerical and spiritual growth will happen. Jesus said, "I will build my church." The Scripture also declares, "Except the Lord build the house [church], they labor in vain." If we do our part, God will do His part.

For growth to take place, it is critical that a church has a vision. A vision helps a church live with expectation and anticipation and helps keep it from living in ritual and formality. The Scripture teaches that the church is an organism. It breathes; it has life; and it gives life because that's what happens when we are in Christ Jesus.

#### **WHAT OTHER ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR PASTORS IN SMALLER CHURCHES?**

TRASK: Don't compare yourself with others in the ministry. The enemy will use this to discourage you. Know that you are called to the place where you are. With that comes confidence, faith, and assurance that you are in God's will. Then, during times of discouragement, you can go back to that experience and remind yourself, *This is where God spoke to me, and I know God sent me here.*

Pastor, love your people. The gospel is a people business. Some in the church are easy to love—they are loving, kind, warm, and responsive. There are also those who might not be as easy to love, but they are still a part of the body of Christ.

Be a shepherd to your people. Feed them. When you do, they will tell others, "Hey, you've got to hear our pastor. He [she] is a great preacher. He's [she's] a great expositor of the Word of God." People today are hungry for the Word. They're hungry to be cared for and loved. Only the church can provide that for a community. 

INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS E. TRASK AND GARY R. ALLEN

# EMPOWER.AG.ORG— A NEW WEB-BASED MINISTRY RESOURCE CENTER FOR LOCAL LAY LEADERS

*Churches across America and around the globe are filled with people who possess gifts and skills that can enhance the ministry of the local church. Unfortunately, many of the ministry gifts that reside in the body of Christ are not being used because many of God's people lack proper training and resources.*

*To assist pastors in training local church leaders, the Ministerial Enrichment Office has developed a web-based ministry resource center just for laity. This resource hub will help to facilitate the training of Spirit-filled believers so they can assume leadership responsibility in the church and become more effective in worship, discipleship, and evangelism.*

*General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask and Ministerial Enrichment Office Coordinator Gary R. Allen discuss the importance of leadership training and the new Empower Web site.*

## **HOW STRONGLY IS THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD COMMITTED TO TRAINING MINISTERS AND LAYPEOPLE?**

**TRASK:** We want to do everything we can to strengthen our ministers and laypeople. We will not raise the level of the church until we raise the level of its leadership. We must continue to train and resource our ministers so they in turn can invest themselves in the laity and help them develop and utilize their gifts. When we do this, the church will be more effective.

Pastors of any size church have people in their congregations whom they can develop in leadership. Many smaller churches can't afford full-time staff, but pastors can train people in their congregations to lead the various

ministries of the church. If we will train people for leadership, we will not lack the leaders we need.

**ALLEN:** In the Illinois District, we implemented the Leadership Training Network to take leadership training to the local church. We conducted training sessions on-site, usually on Friday evening and all day on Saturday. I

network hub that links to the leadership-training materials and resources from the various departments and ministries at Headquarters.

## **HOW WILL EMPOWER.AG.ORG HELP THE LOCAL PASTOR?**

**TRASK:** A pastor who is looking for training resources would be wise in directing his or her lay leaders to

**For the local church to be effective in the 21st century, it must be more intentional in partnering ministers and lay leaders. —Allen**

have been asked to bring the material presented in these sessions to the Ministerial Enrichment Office to help resource pastors and local-church leaders.

## **HOW CAN THE INTERNET BE A VIABLE TOOL TO RESOURCE LAY LEADERS?**

**TRASK:** The Internet is one of the great tools God is using and will use in a greater way in days to come. The church that is looking into the 21st century must develop Internet resources. The business world benefits from the Internet, and the church needs to utilize these tools for the kingdom of God.

**ALLEN:** The Ministerial Enrichment Office has implemented [www.empower.ag.org](http://www.empower.ag.org), a Web site where lay leaders can go for leadership-training materials and resources. Empower.ag.org also serves as a

[www.empower.ag.org](http://www.empower.ag.org). Many of these leaders want to learn and are looking for training materials. Empower.ag.org is a tool that God has given the local church and pastor to provide them with these resources. Many laypeople are saying, "Tell me what you want done, show me how to do it, and I'll do it." Our problem in the church is not lack of personnel; it's a lack of challenge and a lack of training. We're responsible for that. If pastors and their people will use [www.empower.ag.org](http://www.empower.ag.org), they will be blessed, the church will be blessed, and the Kingdom will be blessed.

**ALLEN:** For the local church to be effective in the 21st century, it must be more intentional in partnering ministers and lay leaders. The Ministerial Enrichment Office is prepared to be the resource center for leadership training to help pastors and lay leaders partner for ministry. **e**







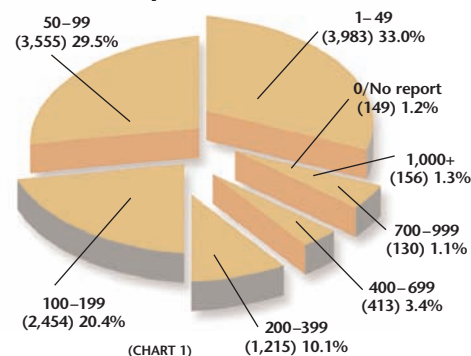
# MINISTERING EFFECTIVELY IN THE SMALLER-CHURCH CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

The book, *Small Churches are Beautiful*,<sup>1</sup> might seem enigmatic in a culture that worships at the altars of success and size. But ministering in smaller churches and communities has positively impacted many pastors and their families. The relationships they established and the lessons they learned many times transformed their lives and ministries.

It is disconcerting when smaller churches are tagged with labels such as “bound by the past,” “opposed to change,” “inward-focused,” or “on the verge of extinction.” What some decry as being bound by the past may instead reflect strong moorings in rich, biblical tradition. What some see as opposition to change may be a cautious wisdom that avoids the theological and programmatic novelties and fads in today’s religious world. What some call inward-focused may be a sense of commitment to the local church and its members that demonstrates the true nature of Christian love and unity to the watching world. And finally, when attendance and budget totals seem to signal impending disaster, the history of many smaller churches records a remarkable record of resilience and perseverance.

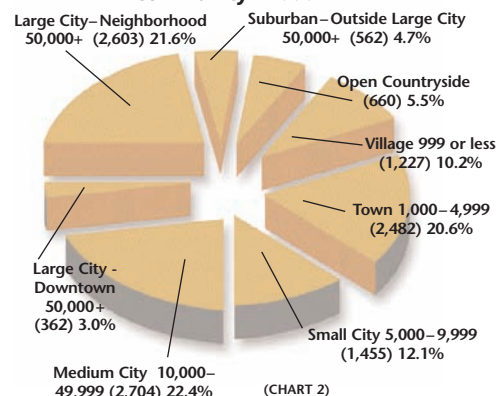
How prevalent are smaller churches in the Assemblies of God? According to the 1999 ACMR compiled by Sherri L. Doty, Assemblies of God statistician, 64 percent of A/G churches have a Sunday morning attendance of 99 or less; 84 percent have a Sunday morning attendance of 199 or less. (See chart 1.) Fifty percent of our

**Total Churches by Sunday AM Worship Attendance—1999**



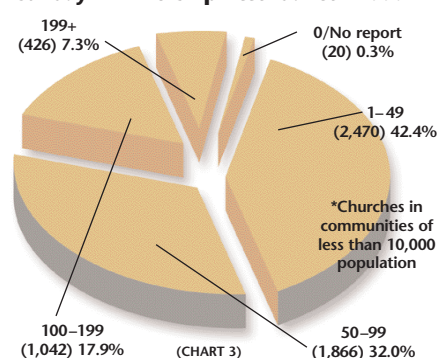
churches are located in communities with a population of less than 10,000. (See chart 2.) Of these churches, almost

**Total Churches by Size of Community—1999**



75 percent have an average Sunday morning attendance of 99 or less and 93 percent 199 or less. (See chart 3.) The inescapable conclusion: many of our churches are smaller and are located in small towns and rural areas.

**Churches in Smaller\* Communities by Sunday AM Worship Attendance—1999**



The ability to develop strong relationships in a smaller church and to facilitate effective ministry depends in large part on how a pastor relates to a smaller-church culture. Listed below are three significant aspects of relating to this culture.

### PROPER ATTITUDES

Attitude is critical to successful ministry in any context, but particularly in the smaller church and community. Consider the following attitudinal choices the pastor will need to make in this context:

#### Will I view this assignment as a demotion or a promotion?

Am I being punished by my district superintendent or rewarded by the Lord of the Church? Any opportunity for ministry that is in the will of God must be viewed as a promotion. What might appear at first to be a curse might turn out to be one of life's most significant blessings.

#### Will I view this assignment as temporary or forever?

The pastor who considers a small-church pastorate as a steppingstone or basic training for real ministry may project a detachment that precludes effective ministry. The pastor who embraces the will of God and is willing to stay in that place forever will seek to put down roots that will produce fruitful ministry. How good it is to respond to the sincere question of a parishioner, "How long will you stay here?" by saying, "As long as the Lord desires," or, "I would be happy to be here when the Lord returns"—and mean it with all your heart.

#### Do I love people (crowds), or do I love persons (individuals)?

While there should always be a goal toward increasing attendance, pastors should not allow frustration with low numbers to negate a pastoral concern that seeks to determine the needs of those who are absent. In addition to asking, "How many did we have this

morning?" the pastor of the smaller church should also ask, "Does anyone know where Bill was this morning?"

#### Is it my intent to dismantle what has been done in the past or to build on what is already there?

One pastor refused to recognize the salvation testimony of anyone in his congregation unless that person had responded to an invitation he had given. Will you appreciate and publicly commend the work of your predecessor(s), or do you need the credit for any good thing that happens?

#### Will I be driven by man's prescription for success or by the Lord's standard of faithful servanthood?

In *No Little Places*, Ron Klassen and John Koessler expose some myths of successful ministry:

- *The numbers myth*: To be significant, a ministry must be big.
- *The recognition myth*: One measure of the significance of my ministry is how much recognition I receive.
- *The cure-for-inferiority myth*: If I can just succeed professionally, I'll no longer feel inferior.<sup>2</sup>

Klassen and Koessler then admonish pastors to reject these human standards and replace them with the following biblical principles:

### The ability to develop strong relationships in a smaller church and to facilitate effective ministry depends in large part on how a pastor relates to a smaller-church culture.

- *The quality principle*: God judges a ministry not by its size, but by its quality (1 Corinthians 3:13).
- *The no-little-places principle*: Wherever God has called me to minister is an important place (Philippians 1:12,13).
- *The glory-of-God principle*: God calls me to seek His glory, not mine (Jeremiah 45:5; John 17:4).
- *The unconditional love principle*: God loves me because He is love, not because of anything I do for Him (Luke 10:20).<sup>3</sup>

#### Will I lament the perceived weaknesses of this congregation or rejoice in their strengths and seek to develop their full potential?

In *Small Churches Are Beautiful*, Arthur C. Tennes notes that smaller churches usually involve a higher percentage of their people than large churches, yet smaller churches appear to be failing. Smaller churches generally give more sacrificially, but may appear to do much less than large churches.<sup>4</sup> Paul's admonition to not compare oneself with others is applicable not only for individuals, but also for congregations (2 Corinthians 10:12).

#### Will I view the elderly in the church as a liability (or tolerate them, at best), or will I recognize their gifts and graces and be willing to learn from their wisdom gained from years of walking with God?

Tragically, some pastors can't wait for the old guard to pass from the scene so what the pastor perceives as resistance to change is eliminated. (Some even seek to justify this attitude by speaking of the need for new wineskins.)

Charles M. Sell reports:

In two recent studies, clergy came out looking only a bit less like the rest of society in terms of attitude toward the elderly. They frequently evaluate

the elderly as forgetful, traditional, slow, lonely, noncontemporary, worried, dependent, and nonsexual. They do enjoy ministerial contacts with older people, but they prefer teaching youth and middle-age adults. If it is a fair assumption that clergy are the most influential persons in churches, then the average church record in dealing with the elderly may be somewhat blemished, pockmarked mostly with lack of empathy.<sup>5</sup>

## 15 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SMALL CHURCH

While no church will manifest all 15 of these characteristics, in most cases there will be several that predominate.

### **The small church is relationally driven.**

There exists within the congregation a family atmosphere where individuals are considered part of a bigger family, where relationships become more important than performance and organization.

### **The small church works through informal channels.**

Because of the close relational bonds, decisions are often made over coffee rather than formal meetings. While policies and procedures for conducting church business are important and should be implemented, they should be communicated informally and in relational terms, rather than through formalized channels.

### **The small church works as a whole.**

When the church acts, it acts as a whole rather than as individual parts. The whole congregation makes decisions rather than a representative few. People desire to know what is going on in every program and ministry even though they are not directly involved. The ultimate decision-making authority resides within the congregation rather than within the board or pastor.

### **Power and authority reside in the laity rather than the pastor.**

The small church is owned and operated by the laity rather than the pastor. While the pastor may retain the title, the power of the church belongs to the people who have built and directed the church for generations. If the pastor comes into conflict with that power, then the pastor will often be asked to leave.

### **The small church relates as a family.**

The small church functions as a family. To become part of the family, a person must be grafted in. This depth of relationship takes time to develop, thus making it difficult for first timers to be included.

### **Communication occurs through the grapevine.**

Everyone knows what is going on because everyone talks about it. The rule of thumb regarding the grapevine is that the smaller the church and more close knit the people, the more the grapevine will be an asset.

### **Traditions and heritage undergird the structure, ministry, and culture.**

Within the small church, traditions are more than ruts; they are the stories and bonds that tie the present congregation to previous generations. Because the small church values not only the present membership, but also past members, traditions play an important role within the life and expression of the church. They are slow to change for change constitutes a break not only from the past, but from the past membership.

### **The church functions and worships intergenerationally.**

Because they are a family they want to be with the whole family. To divide the congregation by age is to split the family. People in the small church not only enjoy being with other family members; they often resent any segregation (other than during the Sunday school).

### **The focus is on people rather than performance.**

In the small church, the focus shifts to the individual person instead of performance. Thus, a person is kept in a particular position even though there are others more qualified and could do a better job.

### **They have a place for everyone.**

The small church has a place for everyone. Whether it be the mentally slow person who runs the sound system, or the retired grandmother who teaches the adult Sunday school class, everyone is given the opportunity to be involved.

### **The small church values relatives.**

Because of its size, the church often has a higher percentage of people related to other members of the church. This interrelatedness has tremendous impact in the life of the congregation. One way it impacts the church is in the selection of key leadership positions.

### **The small church values generalists.**

In an age of specialization, the small church values and utilizes generalists who can do a number of different jobs and responsibilities. Because there are few workers to perform the multiple tasks within the small church, there is a greater value placed on leaders who can do a number of things satisfactorily rather than an individual who can do one thing extremely well.

### **There is a place for everyone and everyone has a place.**

Place is extremely important in the small church. Like a family that sits in the same place for every meal, people sit in the same place Sunday after Sunday. When they are absent, everyone notices their places are empty and they are missed. Place is also a symbol of their belonging to the church family. It symbolizes their security in a world that is insecure. It becomes part of the memory and story of the congregation.

### **It has a different calendar and different timetable.**

Small churches have their own calendars around which they function. These calendars are often seasonal and tied to the employment base for the community.

### **Small-church attenders are givers.**

People in the small church have a strong sense of ownership of the church. As a result, they are willing to give their time and money to the church. However, often they view giving differently. Instead of giving from the standpoint of a set amount, they approach it based upon the needs of the church.

—Glenn C. Daman. Adapted from *Mikros*, a newsletter for small-church pastors, a publication of Western Seminary Institute for Small Church Health. Anyone can receive an E-mail version of *Mikros* free of charge by contacting: [daman@gorge.net](mailto:daman@gorge.net). The complete text of this sidebar can be viewed on: [www.smallchurch.com](http://www.smallchurch.com).

In their book, *Catch the Age Wave*, Win and Charles Arn describe ageism as “a pervasive, negative attitude toward aging and people who are growing old. Like racism or sexism, it is a destructive and discriminatory form of prejudice that is based on flawed stereotypes.”<sup>6</sup>

### SHARED AGENDAS

Most pastors approach a new assignment with their own ideas for revitalizing their church. With an increased emphasis today on visionary leadership, the pastor needs to be aware that there may be other agendas already on the table. Let’s consider some of the possibilities.

#### The Pastor’s Agenda

It is true that each pastor must have a vision for the work of God in his or her congregation and community. It is also true that the vision will come in large part through seeking the Lord in earnest prayer. However, it must be understood that the development of this vision must involve interaction with the people. This takes time and effort. It is probable that the previous pastor had a vision for that same congregation. If that vision differed from yours, or even worse, turned from a vision into a

nightmare, you will have to work hard to gain the respect of the people for the vision you seek to implement.

#### The Church Board’s Agenda

It is likely that members of the church board will have a vision, too. The selection of a new pastor is often predicated on this assumption. If there is the perception by the board that there needs to be a greater emphasis on reaching the lost in the community, the board will probably seek a pastor with evangelistic fervor. If there are unresolved problems in the church, the board will tend to

because of what appears to be conflicting visions. The wise pastor takes time to listen to lay leadership and to learn the culture of that fellowship and the community in which it is located. In fact, much significant information should be shared in the interviewing and candidating stages. In his article, “Candidating—Asking the Right Questions,” Wayde I. Goodall states, “One possible reason some leave churches prematurely could be because they did not ask the right questions up front.”<sup>7</sup>

The late James Hamill, in his book, *Pastor to Pastor*, made the following two observations based on his experience

**Wise is the pastor who takes time to listen  
to lay leadership and to learn the culture of  
that fellowship and the community  
in which it is located.**

look for a pastor who is older, more mature, and capable of bringing stability to the congregation. If there is a desire to hold the fort, a pastoral candidate who is not likely to institute radical change might be appealing.

Too often an adversarial relationship develops between the new pastor and one or more church board members

of many years as a pastor and denominational leader:

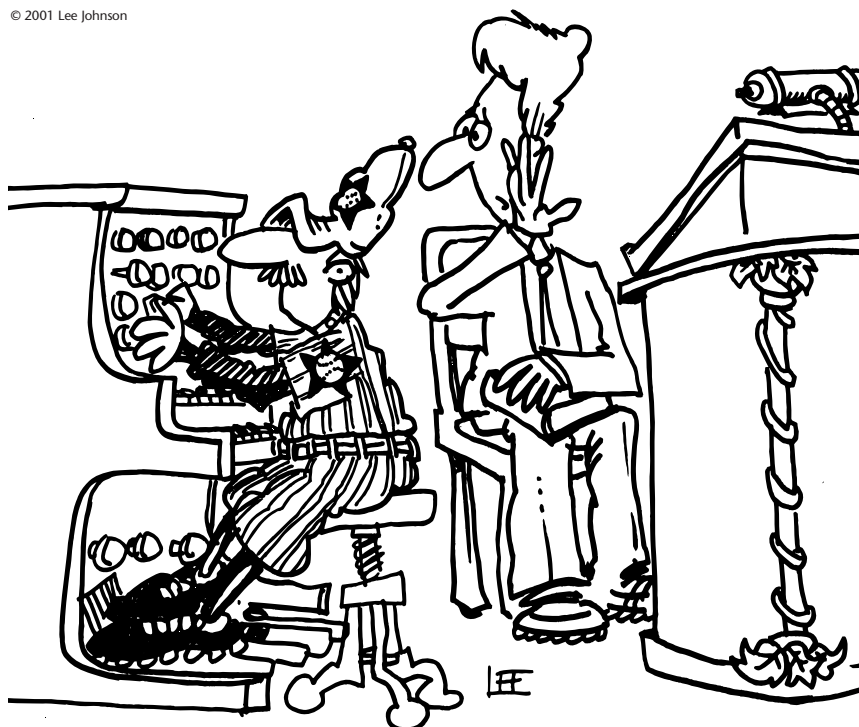
1. The great majority of the people in our churches love the Lord and desire what is good for the church; and,
2. The great majority of serious church problems occur due to the lack of good pastoral leadership.<sup>8</sup>

### ATMOSPHERE FOR GROWTH

The use of the descriptor *small* automatically implies that some churches are size-challenged. More important than congregational size, however, is the matter of congregational health. A church can be large in numbers, but not healthy. Conversely, a congregation may have a limited number of members but be extremely healthy and have great potential for growth.

Stephen McMullin, in his article “New Ways To Measure Growth,” reminds us of some not-so-obvious ways to measure growth, such as decreasing average age, decreasing average length of membership, increasing interest in children, and an expanding geographic base.<sup>9</sup>

To facilitate an atmosphere in which growth (spiritual, relational, and numerical) may take place, the pastor of a smaller church should consider the following plan:



**“I know your stadium gig is right after our service, but next Sunday could you at least wear a robe?”**



### Recognize and nurture existing relationships.

Within the smaller church, there are often family networks consisting of two or more generations. These family networks may provide a number of challenges to address and/or obstacles to overcome.<sup>10</sup> But each challenge or obstacle might also provide a special opportunity for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. In a larger church, one might be identified by profession or position in the community, whereas the strong sense of family in the smaller church, especially within a small community, would emphasize relationship. ("Isn't he Bob Smith's nephew?" or, "I've known her grandmother all my life.") Tapping into these family networks can provide the pastor incredible opportunities for outreach and church growth. On the other hand, disciplining a member of a family network or refusing to perform the wedding ceremony of a family member brings the potential for conflict. However, if the pastor has won the respect of the congregation through careful exposition of biblical principles and consistent decision making, the potential for a positive impact on that family for future generations is equally great.

### Recognize and strengthen loyalty and commitment.

In *The Small-town Church*, Peter Surrey states that one of the three loves of small-town churches is love for each other.<sup>11</sup> Built into the fabric of most smaller churches, especially in the smaller community, is a remarkable sense of loyalty and mutual commitment. (Because of this, some smaller churches have difficulty incorporating new people.) It seems ironic that while some smaller churches are trying to replicate large churches, some large churches are striving to create the intimacy of a smaller church. Each church, regardless of size, should be encouraged to be itself and develop its caring to the full. If it does, it will grow spiritually and numerically.

### Recognize and accommodate existing structure.

It is important for one to ascertain the

existing organizational structure of the smaller church. Whereas the structure of a larger church may be clearly defined (full-time pastoral staff, elders/deacons/trustees with portfolios, departmental leaders), the smaller church will be much less defined. There is structure, but it might take some time to identify and understand it. In this setting, power and influence may not flow from the top down (from pastor to people), but may rise from the grassroots.<sup>12</sup>

Generally, there will be a greater sense of ownership in the smaller church due to the direct involvement of the membership in such things as fundraising and the construction of facilities. A wise pastor will not feel threatened by these realities, but will seek to understand them and make appropriate adjustments.

Ron Crandall surveyed pastors of revitalized churches and asked, "What has contributed most to the growth of this congregation?" The following responses seem indicative of the culture of the smaller church:


- An atmosphere of love and acceptance.
- An attitude of faith and grace
- Laypersons involved in ministry.
- A pastor willing to stay.<sup>13</sup>

### Recognize and appeal to the church's heritage.

Many smaller congregations are products of a local revival. One way for a new pastor to jump-start a stagnant congregation is to learn and then rehearse the heritage of the church. Call the people back to their roots and challenge them to perpetuate that heritage for each succeeding generation. While the use of testimonies has declined, the smaller church can refine this biblical practice and use it effectively to edify and instruct youth and children. Growth will take place as the fire of revival is rekindled and the church is reminded of its reason for being.

### CONCLUSION

A proper attitude, a shared agenda, and an atmosphere for growth—master and nurture these and you too might find

that smaller churches are beautiful. In fact, the numerical size of the congregation you pastor may become dwarfed by the largeness of its heart. 

Dean L. Grabill was involved in pastoral ministry for 25 years (approximately 15 years in small-town/rural contexts). He has taught "Small Town and Rural Ministries" at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. He is currently vice president of academics, Central Bible College, Springfield, Missouri.



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# interview

WITH KERRY ANDREWS,  
KIM KRUGER, AND MARK ROSE

## New Life for **Dying Churches!**



**KERRY ANDREWS**



**KIM KRUGER**



**MARK ROSE**

**N**ot all smaller churches are dying; some are thriving, but that may not have always been the case. Many churches that were declining have made a transition. A renewed vision by pastors and congregations and a desire to see these churches grow made the difference.

Enrichment journal interviewed three pastors who were successful in turning around their churches. Kerry Andrews, pastor of New Heights Assembly of God in York, Nebraska; Kim Kruger, pastor of Malone Assembly of God in Malone, Washington; and Mark Rose, pastor of Victory Road Assembly of God in Norfolk, Nebraska, share their hearts and the process of transforming their churches into vibrant churches that are reaching their communities for Christ.

### **DESCRIBE THE SITUATION AT YOUR CHURCH WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVED**

**KRUGER:** About 30 people were attending the church when we arrived. The average age of the adult congregation was just under 40. Many of them were discouraged because they had been through a rough time. But even in their discouragement, they did have some hope. They had pulled together and were remodeling the church building.

I have been pastoring the church for 10 years. The church just celebrated its 60th anniversary, and we're averaging a little over 200 in Sunday morning worship.

**ROSE:** When I came to Norfolk, the church was 57 years old. I am the 19th pastor and the second longest-tenured pastor. I have been here 12 years. We were averaging about 80 on Sunday mornings.

The church had a spirit of smallness, which is pervasive in our community. The community and the church were not progressive. The church had been through a dispute, and several of the people began attending another Pentecostal church in the community.

The church had no vision—no one could state why we were in the community. Now we are averaging 200, the largest the church has ever been. In 1992 we moved into a new 13,000-square-foot facility. We recently paid off our building.

**ANDREWS:** We came to York in January 1995. The church was in a tiny, run-down building that had been moved a couple of times and had been added onto. Less than 25 people were attending. There was no sense that things could get better. We built a new building and moved into our new facility in October 1997, with about 140 people. We now have approximately 160 people on Sunday morning. We've gone from a hopeless, discouraged, despairing attitude to a group of people that are future oriented.



## HOW DID YOU KNOW GOD HAD CALLED YOU TO YOUR PLACE OF MINISTRY?

**ANDREWS:** About 3 years before we came to York, the church had split. It was not a healthy situation. The people at York finally approached the district about closing the church.

We were on staff at a larger church about an hour away from York. When the district contacted us, we thought we could come to York in a support role. Our church had developed lay leadership, and we thought we might bring some of these leaders with us on Sunday morning to help with the various ministries at York. As we explored

stubbornness, and I finally surrendered. A year later we were candidating. We had candidated in another church the weekend prior to candidating at Norfolk. We had also been contacted by another church, but we didn't feel we could say yes to these churches because we sensed God wanted us in Norfolk. But I was still having problems accepting this. Driving to the interview I told my wife, "I hate this place. I don't want to be here." But as we drove into town, I knew in my spirit that this was where God had called us.

**KRUGER:** The district sent me to Malone as a last-ditch effort, hoping

He replied, "You should go to Malone."

Years before, my wife and I had determined we would never go to Malone. We knew about the church and what the building looked like. I responded, "No, I won't go there."

He said, "They're between pastors right now. How about filling the pulpit for two Sundays?"

I said, "I'll fill the pulpit, but I'm not candidating. Keep me in mind for someplace else."

When we came the first week to fill the pulpit, my wife and I said to each other as we drove away, "If we come here, it'll be awesome...this will happen,

**I was embittered about some things that had happened to me as a youth pastor. One day my senior pastor asked, "When are you going to give up and go into ministry?"—Rose**



that possibility, God began to touch our hearts, not just about the church, but about the city of York. We felt God calling us to York.

**ROSE:** This is my first senior pastorate. I had been a youth pastor and stepped away from that position. I was embittered about some things that had happened to me as a youth pastor. One day my senior pastor asked, "When are you going to give up and go into ministry?"

I looked at him and said sincerely, "Never." The Lord had to deal with me rather severely because of my

that something good would happen. It was the kind of situation I needed, because I was not very confident.

I was a youth pastor in eastern Washington, and my brother was my senior pastor. I thought I would be a youth pastor until the Rapture. After 6 years of being a youth pastor, my brother knew I was ready for a senior pastorate. After a year of his prodding, I called our assistant district superintendent and said, "I am thinking about going to a small church somewhere, but not a home missions church. Do you have anyplace like that?"

that will happen, and we can...." Then we'd say, "No, wait a minute; we are *not* going there. What are we thinking?" We did this for 4 hours.

## WHAT STEPS DID YOU TAKE TO BRING THE CHURCH TO WHERE IT IS TODAY?

**ANDREWS:** One of the first things I did was to get out of the building we were in. This was critical. Change was important. We could have said, "The building shouldn't matter," but we knew it did. We came in January and by the first week of February we were looking for

another place in which to meet. This brought a sense of moving ahead to the people. We had to get that process started, and the most visible, tangible way to do that was to walk away from our building.

**ROSE:** There were four things we did that took a year to accomplish. First, we began to organize the finances and bring financial integrity to the church. The church had seven different checking accounts and two savings accounts. A different person managed each checking account, and each person kept the checkbook at home. We had \$400 in the bank and \$1,200 in bills. Each week the board decided which ones they could pay. At the end of our first year, we had \$10,000 in the bank and had paid all of our bills.

Second, we began to broaden our vision for missions. I approached the board about having a missions convention, but the board wasn't interested in spending the \$100 for decorations and promotion. I asked if my wife and I could pay for it.

They said, "Sure, you can pay for it, and we'll come." From that day on, everything in the church started to turn around.

Third, we built a sense of family and unity. We purchased property across the street from the church for parking. We had a workday and tore down the building, house, barn, garage, and cleaned up the property. This built a unity among the 45 people who came that day.

Fourth, we began to participate in community events. Our church was unknown in this community, so we built a float for the community parade. This gave us exposure in the community. People asked, "Is this a new church in town?"

**KRUGER:** When we came to Malone, the church had financial problems. In fact, there were lost bills. Business owners called and asked, "Are you going to pay this bill?"

I went to the businesses in town and said, "I'm the pastor at Malone

Assembly of God. Do we owe you any money?"

The other thing we did was to promote missions. The first time I asked if we could have a missionary at the church, they told me, "No, we've got enough problems without that."

I told the church, "There are people hurting worse than you."

A few months later a missionary called and I said, "I cannot guarantee you anything except that if you will come, you will help us more than we will help you." He came, and we gave him \$175. The people's hearts were changed that day. Missions is our passion. We are now supporting 30 missionaries.

### HOW DID YOU IMPART VISION?

**KRUGER:** I preached positive messages and talked about what could happen. One Sunday, I was preaching about the things God was going to do in the future. The people were looking at me thinking, *How long are you going to be here?*

I said, "You know, you're all looking at me thinking, *How long are you going to be here?* I don't know how long I'm going to be here. That's up to God. God brought me here, and He will take me away when it's time. I cannot promise you how long I will be here. But I can promise that what God says in His Word He will do."

After the sermon people said, "That was good preaching, Pastor, but don't ever read our minds like that again." That was a turning point for the church. They realized their confidence should not be in the pastor, but in God.

**ANDREWS:** One thing that is lacking in smaller churches, especially churches that have experienced a lot of transition, is security. People are uneasy about what is going to happen. They are uneasy about their future, because they have never had a future. One of the questions we were asked several times during our first year was, "Pastor, are you going to stay?" One of the most significant things we did was to buy a house. This showed some stability. When people feel secure, they are more likely to latch onto something, take a risk, and move with it.

### GEORGE BARNA IDENTIFIES SIX QUALITIES OF TURNAROUND PASTORS IN HIS BOOK *TURNAROUND CHURCHES*. WHAT QUALITIES OF A TURNAROUND PASTOR CHARACTERIZE YOU MOST?

**ROSE:** I'm a risk taker. I leap before I look. On the way down, I figure out where I'm going to land. My congregation is not like that. I was a distinct shock to most of these people. I'm also a visionary. I think bigger than what I can ever accomplish on my own. I also encourage my people to think the same way because then only God can do it, and only God can get the credit.

**KRUGER:** I am a team builder. I started coaching basketball at the middle school to show the people I'm a part of this team. We're going to work together on this. When we were in the middle of remodeling the church, I was on the scaffolding putting on siding and painting.

I am also an encourager. When I came, people were discouraged. Some called or came by and said, "Pastor, I don't know if I can handle it any longer." One of the first messages I preached was "Pursue, Overtake, Recover All" from 1 Samuel 30. When David went back to Ziklag, he found that the town had been burned and everything was gone. His soldiers were ready to stone him. He asked, "God, what am I going to do?"

God replied, "You're going to pursue; you're going to overtake, and you're going to recover all. As a bonus, you'll plunder the enemy."

I told the people, "We may be down, but God's on our side."

### WHAT WAS THE DISTRICT'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE REVITALIZATION PROCESS OF YOUR CHURCH?

**KRUGER:** The district was highly encouraging and supportive. District officials came and spoke at our services, and the congregation thought, *They do care about us.*

**ANDREWS:** Prior to 1995, the church

**A few months later a missionary called and I said, "I cannot guarantee you anything except that if you will come, you will help us more than we will help you."—Kruger**



had very little district affiliation. The church didn't take its kids to camp, and pastors did not attend district functions. I came from a church that had a strong district affiliation. I brought that mindset with me.

I helped the people understand that we are part of a much larger Movement than just York, Nebraska. This gave the church the feeling of being connected to something bigger than what they were. This congregation needed to know that they weren't isolated and alone.

The district augmented my salary for the first year. I could have done it otherwise. But the district support allowed me to concentrate my time and energy on developing the church. This was instrumental in the turnaround.

**WHAT PRINCIPLES GUIDED YOU THROUGH THE CHANGE? WAS THERE A DEFINING OR BREAKTHROUGH MOMENT FOR THE CHURCH?**

**ANDREWS:** From the beginning, we decided that nothing was too sacred to be examined critically. We knew this would mean a redefining of ministries, facility needs, and leadership. To turn a church around, particularly a church that is in decline, the leadership structure has to change.

In our church, we had the old group

and the new group. There was some resistance within these groups because our church grew quickly our first year. We had difficulty interfacing those two groups. To unite the two groups, I knew we had to empower leaders. We began to remold the leadership structure, finding new places of ministry for existing leaders and creating new places of ministry for new, emerging leaders. Nobody got dropped or lost in the shuffle because everybody had a new job. That was one of those sacred things we knew we had to examine.

The things that received the most resistance weren't the things I had anticipated. Walking away from the building the church had been in for 60 years was not the stumbling block I had anticipated it might be.

I have been good at resolving conflict. When people walk away from the negotiating table, I have the ability to help them feel important, listened to, and empowered. In a turnaround church, where change is in order, there will be conflict, and good conflict resolution skills are important.

**ROSE:** My community is distrustful of authority. My church was particularly defensive about that issue, and there had been a disparity between the

congregation and the pastor—real enmity and an active hostility at times. One of the reasons for that was the issue of finances. My wife and I purposed we would be transparent. I gave my church my personal budget and said, "Here's what it costs me to live. Here's what I spent last year on everything." I publish my salary, I publish my associate's salary, we publish our benefits—everything. Anyone can see my checkbook. I only have one rule: I'll show them mine if they will show me theirs. I've only had one person challenge me. This has given us immense credibility in the church. It took away the barriers of secrecy that existed.

The second one was that we would do everything with excellence. God is a God of excellence.

**KRUGER:** A defining moment for our church happened after we had the missionary come. A few months after that, we decided we would tithe to missions from the general fund. At the time we didn't have enough finances to do anything extra. When we began to tithe, it broke everything loose financially. We just talked it over and I said, "We're going to do this; it's a principle of the Word. God says to tithe." We are still tithing to missions, and it's a huge tithe

now. I would encourage any pastor to try this. If it works for individuals, it'll work for a church.

#### **HOW HAVE YOU HANDLED DISCOURAGEMENT?**

**ANDREWS:** A friend told me, "You can make small changes quickly, but make big changes slowly." Too many pastors get discouraged when they try to kill too many sacred cows at once. They seal their own fate. Like the 12 spies, it's important to look at the lay of the land...and take a little bit of time.

Pastors can get discouraged when they don't see change as fast as what they had anticipated and don't see their goals being met. My solution is to celebrate small victories. I look for people in the congregation who can become

I became discouraged when we were building our new building. We had poured the slab, didn't owe any money, and the building was ready to go up. I was discouraged because we weren't growing, and the people weren't doing things I thought they should be doing. The day I spoke to the Lord about leaving, I received two job offers: one secular, and one to take another church that ran about 300 people and had a great missions budget. I knew in my spirit the Lord was asking, "What are you going to do? Are you going to obey Me or are you going to do what you want to do?" So when I get discouraged, many times it comes down to the simple question, "Will you follow Me?"

to remind me of the good things He has done.

#### **WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO PASTORS OF SMALL OR DECLINING CHURCHES?**

**KRUGER:** Never give up. God always has an answer.

**ROSE:** There is a lot of resistance in some churches. You have to bring people along with you. Let them see what's in your heart. The church isn't about buildings. Buildings make a difference, but the church is about people, and people move at different paces.

Second, don't ever give up. Too many pastors stop short of seeing God accomplish what they had envisioned. They walk away just days before the Lord

**As we explored that possibility, God began to touch our hearts, not just about the church, but about the city of York. We felt God calling us to York.—Andrews**



heroes. When others view them this way, they have a sense of recognition and ownership. We've maintained a lot of momentum that way.

**ROSE:** What discourages me most is when God has asked me to do the impossible, and I look ahead and think, *There's no way*. My discouragement comes from a fear of failure. If I'm looking ahead and I don't see any way to make something happen, I become discouraged.

**KRUGER:** I grew up on a farm in eastern Washington, so I'm more of a plodder. I plow, and when the plowing is done, I put seed in the ground. Then some months later, a crop comes and I harvest that crop. Because of that background, my wife and I have not been extremely susceptible to discouragement. We know that everything takes time. I do get discouraged, but God has a way of speaking encouragement to me. God has been so faithful

breaks through. So, whatever Jesus asks you to do, do it intentionally. You may not know how to do what He's asking you to do, but know what He is asking you to do before you take a single step.

Finally, it's imperative that you know why your church is in your community. This will help keep you from comparing yourself and your church with another pastor and church in the community or in the district, and it will lessen your discouragement.



## Top 20 Fastest-Growing Assemblies of God Churches Sunday AM Worship Attendance

(This list is based on churches whose attendance was less than 99 in 1994.)


Church	City	State	1994 ACMR Attendance	1999 ACMR Attendance	Numeric Change	% Change
Glad Tidings Tabernacle	New York	N.Y.	35*	450	415	1,185.7
Joywood Bridge of Hope Assembly of God	Nashville	Tenn.	13*	141	128	984.6
Rock Assembly of God	Fort Towson	Okla.	4*	40	36	900.0
Cornerstone Assembly of God	Phillipsburg	Mo.	5*	49	44	880.0
Assembly of God	Worthington	Ind.	22*	163	141	640.9
McCloud First Assembly of God	McCloud	Okla.	10*	70	60	600.0
Lakes Area Assembly of God Ministries	Walled Lake	Mich.	32*	220	188	587.5
Fair Play Assembly of God	Fair Play	Mo.	15*	100	85	566.7
Intercultural Assembly of God	Fairbanks	Alaska	7*	46	39	557.1
Freedoms Way Assembly of God	Hodgenville	Ky.	12*	70	58	483.3
La Palma Christian Center	La Palma	Calif.	70*	400	330	471.4
Golden Valley Assembly of God	Golden Valley	Ariz.	9*	50	41	455.6
Ocean City Worship Center	Berlin	Md.	55*	288	233	423.6
First Assembly of God	Carrizo Springs	Tex.	6*	31	25	416.7
Assembly of God (Sumatra)	Bristol	Fla.	7*	35	28	400.0
Assembly of God	Leon	Kans.	6*	30	24	400.0
First Assembly of God	Farmerville	La.	50*	250	200	400.0
New Beginnings Assembly of God	Hicksville	N.Y.	12*	58	46	383.3
First Assembly of God	Douglasville	Ga.	80*	385	305	381.3
New Generation Assembly of God	Lynchburg	Va.	21*	100	79	376.2

\*Attendance estimated or carried forward from the previous year.

**ANDREWS:** I've been a pastor of a small church, and I've also been the owner of a small business. There is a tendency to play the comparison game. That is one of the greatest traps a smaller-church pastor can fall into. It is one of the greatest sources of discouragement as we look around and see someone doing

what, in our estimation, is not much different from what we are doing, and his or her church is doing better than our church. It's a perception problem.

The greatest advice I heard was from Tommy Barnett years ago at a General Council. He said, "Just because we run buses all through the city of Phoenix

doesn't mean you need to go out and buy a bus." God will tell each one of us specifically what He wants us to do in our particular situation. Don't lose sight of what the function of the pastorate is—we are called to be shepherds not church builders. If we concentrate on His people, He'll build our churches. 

MINISTRY IN THE SMALLER CONGREGATION

# UNDERSTANDING ROOM

YOUR

E

The apostle Paul's desire was to proclaim the gospel without apology or compromise (1 Corinthians 9:16). Yet he recognized that the communication of the gospel needed to be culturally sensitive. The proclamation of the gospel is not done in a cultural vacuum, but must be done in the context of a specific cultural setting. While not compromising the gospel in any form, Paul was willing to adapt his ministry to the cultural sensitivity of the people he was desiring to reach (1 Corinthians 9:19–23).

In the process of establishing direction for the smaller church, it is necessary to have a cultural understanding of the community. Like the men of Issachar who “understood the times and knew what Israel should do” (1 Chronicles 12:32), the church needs to understand its times and cultural setting. This involves six steps.

### **ASSESS THE SPIRITUAL CLIMATE**

Each community, small and large, has a different spiritual climate. Some communities are receptive and open to the the gospel; others are tolerant of the church, but disinterested in the gospel. Some communities are antagonistic toward the church and openly hostile toward its ministry. To understand the

spiritual climate of the community, Rick Warren suggests asking the unchurched five questions.

**1. What is the greatest need in the area?** This question gets people talking and sharing their thoughts about the community.

**2. Do you attend any church?** If they do, thank them for their time and move on to the next house. The purpose of the survey is to understand the spiritual receptivity of the unchurched, not the church.

**3. Why do you think people today don't attend church?** Asking people why they don't attend church will put them on the defensive. Asking people why others do not attend will usually result in them sharing why they don't attend.

**4. What would you look for in a church if you were to attend?** This question helps the church understand what kind of church programs people would be interested in.

**5. What can we do for you and what advice can you give us so we can better serve the people of our community?** Since the church is to minister to people, it needs to know how it can better serve people.

This survey should be brief, and it should be made clear that you are merely seeking their opinion rather than trying to sell them something. After the survey is conducted, the information can be used by the church in assessing its evangelistic programs. By using the information in program development, the church is able to minister to the people in a relevant manner.

## ASSESS THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE COMMUNITY

In smaller communities, developing a demographic assessment of the community can be done by having people assess their own neighbors and compile the information or by obtaining a demographic assessment from a demographic research organization. In larger communities, demographic assessment can be obtained through government agencies or demographic research organizations. (See sidebar, "Building His Church

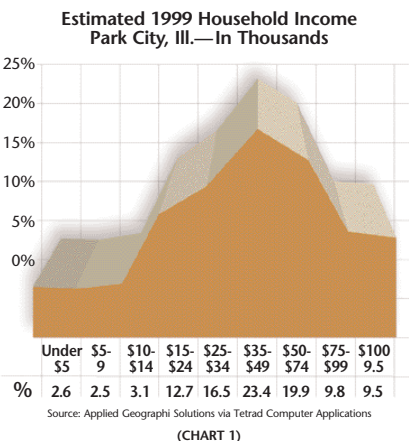
Wisely With Numbers—It's the Demographic Way.") The demographic study should address the following:

**Age:** What is the median age of the community and how many people are in each age bracket?

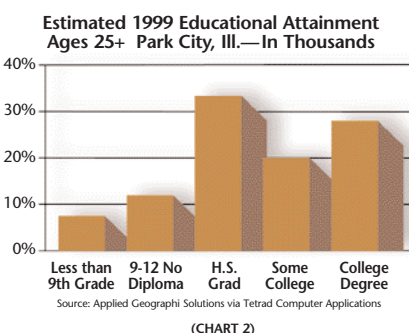
**Family status:** What is the number of children in each family and their ages? What is the marital status of people? What percentage are divorced, remarried, widowed, or living together?

**Employment and economic base:** What are the primary industries and job opportunities within the community?

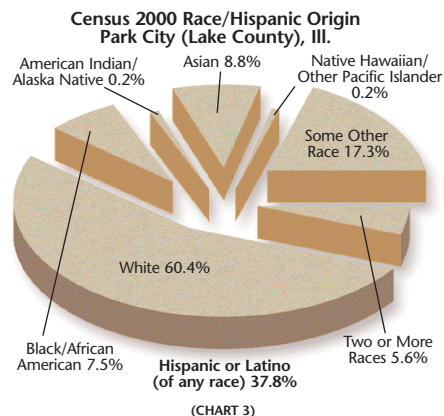
**Income level and social status:** What is the average income level of the community and the average social status? Do the people have a high or low standard of living? (See sample chart 1.)



**Education level:** How much education does the average person have? How much education is required for the employment opportunities within the community? (See sample chart 2.)



**Nationality and ethnic background:** Is there any ethnic background within the community? Does the ethnic heritage of the community have any effect on the religious base within the community? (See sample chart 3.)



**Religious background:** Has there been any religious background that has predominated in the community?

**Geographic boundaries:** What is the geographic extent of the ministry of the church? Is the influence of the church limited to a portion of a city or town, the town itself, or the surrounding areas?

## ASSESS THE CULTURE OF THE COMMUNITY

Effective ministry planning incorporates the understanding of its cultural environment. Culture is the ideas, norms, and material formations that typify a specific group of people. The purpose of the assessment is to gain insight into these areas by looking at the visible expressions of the culture. By assessing the culture of the community, the church will have a better perception of the influences that not only affect people within the church, but also affect the programming of the church.

**1. Assess the mind-set and lifestyle of the community.**

*Active versus sedentary.* Are people's lifestyles filled with activity, or do they spend their leisure time quietly?

*Family versus career focused.* Some people form life goals based on their careers, while others base them on their family relationships.

*Individualism versus community.* Is there a strong sense of community and are people measured by their contribution to the community, or is there a strong sense of individualism apart from any community involvement?

*Politically conservative versus politically liberal.* How the community votes provides insight

into the values and beliefs of the community.

*Environmentalist versus environmental usage.* Do people in the community place the preservation of the environment as a higher value than individual livelihood?

*Traditional versus progressive.* Traditional communities evaluate issues by

the past traditions of the community and resist change, while others place little value in the traditions and have a more innovative outlook that welcomes change.

*Religious versus secular.* Does the community have a strong religious heritage or are people uninvolved in religious activities and secular in their mind-set?

*Stable population versus mobile population.* What is the turnover rate of the population within the community? What are the factors that contribute to the turnover rate?

*Homogeneous versus multicultural.* Is the community predominantly influenced by one cultural expression or are there multiple subcultures

## BUILDING HIS CHURCH WISELY WITH NUMBERS—IT'S THE DEMOGRAPHIC WAY

It is often said there is nothing spiritual about numbers. On the other hand, numbers are scriptural. The Book of Genesis records the number of days it took for creation. Jesus selected 12 disciples, commissioned 70 to go out in pairs, and miraculously fed 5,000 men, not counting the women and children. Luke, the writer of the Book of Acts, records that 120 were together in prayer on the Day of Pentecost. In Revelation, the last book of the Bible, numbers are used to describe population patterns, strategies for future events (the seals and trumpets), and even to describe the dimensions of a new city.

Jesus described the successful or wise builder as one who: (1) can picture in his mind the future building, (2) can accept the challenges that come with the building process, and (3) can accurately calculate the materials required in building the edifice. Unfinished structures point to the unsuccessful builder who was unable to complete the project. On the other hand, active construction projects give witness to an ongoing growth process in a successful company or enterprise.

As a pastor, you have the privilege of participating with God in building His kingdom. Today, there are many unfinished smaller churches that have become stagnant because of unwise decisions. Other unfinished churches are new church plants that never materialized successfully. Could it be that these unfinished churches could be revitalized and transformed into vibrant congregations with the use of numbers...via a demographic study?

The dictionary describes demography as, "The statistical study of human population, especially with reference to size and density, distribution, and vital statistics." A demographic study has helped many pastors of smaller churches to be successful in reaching their communities with the gospel.

Since demographics involve the statistical study of human population, they can help the smaller congregation in various ways. A demographic study provides a clear picture of the population in your community. A study can assist you and other leaders of smaller congregations in:

- structuring the ministries of the church to reach the age groupings that comprise your community.
- developing new ministries to reach the statistical trends that are impacting your population—young couples, single adults, morning and evening services, and activities to reach blue-collar workers who work day or night shifts.
- considering an outreach to an ethnic group that is growing in your community.
- affirming the current mission of a smaller congregation as the statistical data confirms the effectiveness of the local church in reaching the limited population within its outreach.
- providing a consultant service without incurring the more expensive cost of bringing a professional individual to do a site study.

A demographic study can be as challenging as you and your congregation allows it to be. Being a small congregation is not necessarily negative. Your congregation may be small, yet effective in reaching its community, and a demographic study can confirm your effectiveness. On the other hand, as a small congregation you can use demographic information to plan new outreaches and ministries that can help your church grow.

There is a difference between being efficient and being effective. Efficient is doing things right while effective is doing the right things. It is the challenge for every pastor and congregation to be effective in building Christ's church wisely with numbers—it's the demographic way.

—Efraim Espinoza is We Build People field representative and assistant to the commissioner on discipleship, Springfield, Missouri.

NOTE: A demographic report can be obtained at a nominal cost for a given community or sector of a city by calling Demographic and Church Research Network at 417-862-2781, ext. 3381. D-CRN is a service of the General Council of the Assemblies of God to its ministers and congregations. (See D-CRN ad in the marketplace section.)

and ethnic backgrounds within the community?

*Relational versus accomplishment.* Are people evaluated by their ability to relate with others or by what they can accomplish and achieve?

*Blue collar versus white collar.* Depending on the economic base, some communities may consist predominantly of professionals while others belong to the working class.

*Federalism versus libertarianism.* Does the community hold to a strong centralized government or to a decentralized government where the federal government is viewed with suspicion?

*Cosmopolitan versus providential.* Cosmopolitan communities have a strong interest in world events, whereas providential communities are concerned only with the events happening within the local community.

*Academic/educational versus nonacademic view.* Is education highly valued and emphasized, or is higher education seen as unnecessary for success? Are decisions based on a scientific model or on one's gut reaction?

*Futurism versus here and now.* Are people anticipating the future and future events or are the people predominantly concerned only with the present?

*Hi-tech versus lo-tech.* To what extent have people been influenced by the technological movement?

## 2. Assess the social centers of the community.

Understanding a community involves examining the community to see what the social centers are for that area. Where do people congregate? What social events does the community support? When people get together with their neighbors and friends, where do they go?

## 3. Assess the customs of the community.

Are there any customs that mark the community? Customs are the long-established practices that become an integral part of the community infrastructure.

## 4. Assess the history of the community.

Every community has a different story. Whether the story is actually verbalized or not, it does serve to undergird the fabric of the community. New people in the community eventually learn and become part of the community story, or they remain outsiders. For the church to understand the community, it needs to have a clear understanding of the history of the community.

## 5. Assess the cultural indicators of the community.

There are many other cultural indicators that can be surveyed to gain greater insight into the cultural background of the community.

*Music.* What type of music is the most popular within the community? What are the most popular radio stations? At community-sponsored musical events, what type of music is most often played and what groups are brought in?

*Reading material.* What magazines are the most popular within the community? Talk with local businesses that sell magazines to find out which ones are the most popular. What type of books are most often read or purchased? Check with the local librarian to discover the types of books people are reading.

*Local newspaper.* The local newspaper is more than just a recording of local news; it is a record of local culture. The articles that are written describe the culture. By reading the local newspaper, the church leader can gain insight into the interests of the people.

*Community organizations.* Community organizations play a vital role in the social and cultural structure of a community. The organizations that are the most popular are not only those who do a service to the community, but who, in the process, express key values that mark the community.

## ASSESS THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

The goal of assessing the community is to gain an understanding of the

community needs so the church might minister to those needs to bring people to a redemptive knowledge of Christ. While the church is to proclaim the gospel, it is also called to minister to the needs of people (Matthew 15:31–38). The critical question for the church to ask is, “What are the social, emotional, physical, and financial needs of people to whom we have the means to minister?” While the church cannot meet all the needs of people, it can and should seek to minister to their various needs.

## PERSONALIZE YOUR TARGET

After the assessment is done, the church can personalize the target community by creating a composite profile of the typical person within the community. By doing so, the church is able to clearly articulate who it is to reach. This composite can serve as a guide for the church as it seeks to develop direction for the church ministries.

## INTEGRATE THE ASSESSMENT

The final step is integration. The community assessment is of no value if it does not influence the ministries of the church. The questions the church needs to ask are:

- How are we going to reach this person with the gospel?
- What type of programs would minister to the needs of the community?
- As these individuals join our church, are there any key issues that need to be corrected?

To establish goals and direction for the smaller church, the church needs to understand its community and recognize that its mission is to reach that community with the gospel. **e**

*Glenn C. Daman, D.Min., is editor of Mikros. Adapted from Mikros, a newsletter for small-church pastors, a publication of Western Seminary Institute for Small Church Health. To receive a free E-mail version of Mikros contact: daman@gorge.net.*





# Transform the Smaller Church

B Y R O B E R T E . L O G A N  
A N D G A R Y R E I N E C K E

Pastor, you need to be present at the evangelism committee planning meeting for the Harvest Festival," says Ron. "Your presence sends a message to the outreach committee that this program is important to our church."

The pastor responds, "I am already committed that night which makes it my fourth night out this week. And by the way, I do have a family to consider."

"Can't we have someone represent the pastor this weekend?" suggests an elder. An awkward silence follows—each board member is already committed to other projects, and can't imagine one more night given to church activities. The subject gets swept aside and the meeting concludes.

In the hallway after the board meeting, the pastor and Ron pick up the discussion. Dejected, the pastor knows that the Harvest Festival will not produce the kind of fruit the church needs to grow.

"You know, Ron, if we just had a few more committed people, we could do the things we're supposed to be doing," he says. "But I am just one person, and I can't do it all alone."

Ron acknowledges the pastor's frustration as they walk to their cars. The same question persists in both their minds: *What will it take for our church to grow?*

This scenario is repeated in boardrooms around the country. Too many needs, not enough resources.

## **FOUR REASONS WHY SMALLER CHURCHES REMAIN SMALL**

### **Unwillingness To Change**

Established churches with less than 100 in weekly worship attendance have generally plateaued in their growth. Often, the main contributors to this problem are leaders who have become rigid and resistant to new ideas. When leaders become unwilling to take risks in their development, the congregation suffers.

*(Continued on page 33)*



# ing

## EMPOWERING CHURCHES THROUGH EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

# NINE STEPS TO REVITALIZING THE SMALLER CHURCH

## 1. Reflect on God's promises.

As we consider His plans for us and the opportunities around us, we may become more energized to move forward in obedience with renewed desire. The passages listed below may help focus your thoughts:

Jeremiah 32:27	Proverbs 3:5,6	Proverbs 16:3
Isaiah 41:13	Psalms 32:8	Psalms 37:3-5
Ephesians 3:20,21	Zechariah 4:6	Mark 9:23

## 2. Remind your people how God has worked in the past.

The Journey Wall exercise is one way to remember God's past work. Together with your congregational leaders, highlight the ways God has worked in the past year and identify patterns where you have seen the church grow, plateau, and decline. Draw pictures and symbols to represent ways He has blessed, challenged, and led your congregation. Give examples in light of the themes you generated earlier, and strive to understand the barriers to growth. At the conclusion, celebrate His faithfulness and generate ideas about what God may want you to accomplish in the future.

## 3. Consider seeking outside help.

Many pastors have discovered the value of an outside perspective. Ministry coaches can provide needed help in identifying ways to strengthen and grow congregations. Developing a relationship with a ministry coach outside your congregation can give you an objective perspective on strategic issues related to your ministry.

Just as Paul needed a Barnabas, today's pastors need someone they can relate to on a personal level. Do you have anyone outside your congregation you can go to with church-related concerns? If no names come to mind, consider finding a coach. The benefits are numerous. They include objective feedback, guidance, encouragement, accountability, wise counsel, friendship, and support.

## 4. Evaluate your congregation's strengths and weaknesses.

Conduct a ministry audit using the eight quality characteristics as your blueprint for an effective church. Identify your strengths and weaknesses and summarize them in themes and key issues. We recommend using the Natural Church Development survey for an objective assessment of your church's health. The survey helps you focus your energies on the most important issue that needs to be addressed. See the resource list on pages 82 and 83 for information on obtaining ChurchSmart resources.

## 5. Develop goals.

Set barrier-breaking goals that are ambitious but still within reach. Train your people to break barriers quickly (within 3 years) with periods of inspiration and intense effort.

If you want to focus your energies on evangelism, take your leaders through the simple goal-setting process below.

*Identify and list all your current church activities.* Include fellowship

activities, organizational activities, activities of the pastor, and both structured and unstructured activities. Group activities into the following categories: preevangelism, evangelism, assimilation, growth and/or service, and leadership development. Most churches find they spend a lot of energy on activities that don't bring much benefit.

*Evaluate your current effectiveness.* Which activities are working well? What functions are missing? What needs improvement?

*Brainstorm ways to reach new people.* Identify the group(s) you want to reach, their needs, and potential programs to meet those needs. Expand your possibilities by recognizing kinship and friendship links, needs and/or dissatisfactions, and important life transitions.

*Listen to people's hearts with God's ears.* Research the community and the unchurched population, finding both hard. (Your local library has demographic studies from the Census Bureau. You can also contact Demographic and Church Research Network at 417-862-2781, ext. 3381, for a demographic study of your community.) and soft data (conduct personal interviews using active listening skills). Listen for hurts and wounds, unmet needs, unfulfilled goals, and unanswered questions. Create a profile of the target population. Think like they think, so you can identify with them. A compassionate heart softened and prepared by God's Spirit gives birth to a godly vision for ministry.

*List activities you think will be growth producing.* Try to select the best options for your situation and consider whether they are pre-evangelism, evangelism, or assimilation activities. Then focus on the critical few that will really make a difference.

*Determine appropriate action steps.* Put a strategy together that identifies what, how, when, and who will implement the strategies. Build in some form of evaluation and accountability to determine the fruitfulness of your efforts. Celebrate the gains and learn from your losses. Reevaluate periodically.

## 6. Review your values.

Based on your ministry audit and goals, review the values of your congregation. Consider actual values in addition to the stated, official values. Ask yourself whether your actual values reflect who you are or who you want to become. Consider whether any changes need to be made in your values and what would be required to make those changes.

## 7. Refocus your vision.

Ask the following questions to help clarify your vision:

- Is your philosophy of ministry clear, concise, and compelling? (Ask your leaders to articulate it for you.)
- How are people taking responsibility? Are their roles clearly defined?
- How will the changes you are planning impact the ministry?

## 8. Implement the plan.

Provide visionary leadership by taking the initiative. As the leader of your congregation, you must lead the change. This means you

must have a firm, personal resolve. Empathize with your people and recognize that all change is perceived as pain. Your greatest challenge will be to keep your congregation willing to endure the pain in exchange for the gain that comes through change. You must lead the thrust to reach new people while at the same time continuing to care for your own people. To accomplish both, you will most likely need to expand the organization.

### 9. Repeat the cycle.

The challenges and struggles facing the smaller church can only be overcome by an authentic work of God's Spirit. Apart from God's grace, the smaller church may remain small—or worse yet, it may grow. It is by His grace that we are brought back to the truly important focus of revitalization.

What is needed? Healthy churches grow, growing churches change, change forces us to trust God, trust leads to obedience, obedience makes us healthy, healthy churches grow. (James Ryle, adapted from Promise Keepers Clergy Rally.)

—Robert E. Logan, Los Angeles, California.

*(Continued from page 30)*

#### **Attractiveness of the Status Quo, or Absence of Sufficient Discontent With the Status Quo To Motivate and Support Change**

If a smaller church has remained small for 5 years or more, a certain level of comfort settles in. Eventually, this acceptance of the status quo can lead to complacency. This stagnation, combined with an unwillingness to change, bogs churches down in apathy.

#### **Reluctance To Pay the Price for Growth**

Churches with a timid approach to ministry, an attitude of apathy, and a lack of visionary leadership are often reluctant to pay the price for growth. They lack passion for the work God wants to complete through them. In the case of these churches, the problem is simple disobedience.

#### **Lack of Visionary-initiating Leadership**

Active, visionary leadership is characterized by a willingness to dream, take risks, and do the right things well. True visionary leaders have counted the cost and are willing to pay the price for the sake of the Kingdom. When active, visionary leadership is lacking, the people “cast off restraint” (Proverbs 29:18, NIV) and flounder.

### **SMALL CHURCHES CAN GROW**

Large, full-service churches deliver high-quality ministry to their constituencies—that is why they grow. Smaller

churches are presented with a multitude of needs, have fewer resources with which to address them, and are stretched thin for volunteers—that is why they remain small. Do these perceptions represent reality?

Contrary to popular belief, smaller churches have the potential to create high-quality, healthy ministries.<sup>1</sup> Smaller churches also have the potential to reach more unchurched people than their larger counterparts, thus shattering

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**“Miss Peabody, tell the board I’m in a meeting right now, and they’ll never take me alive.”**

the large-church versus small-church myth that bigger is better.

Smaller congregations are often more effective at providing a sense of community for the unchurched. They can give people a sense of individual significance by allowing members to utilize their spiritual gifts. Smaller congregations can also multiply disciples, leaders, groups, and churches at a rapid rate. Given these advantages, it is imperative that we consider the potential of smaller churches and discover the ways God wants to unleash them to advance His kingdom.

The challenge remains, however, to find the pathway to greater health and effectiveness for smaller churches. Effective smaller churches embrace change. They subscribe to the adage: change is not good or bad, but necessary. These churches understand the necessity of change to remain healthy. A healthy church multiplies disciples, leaders, groups, and more churches.

Leading and navigating change in smaller, struggling congregations requires a blueprint to serve as a guide. Below is a brief description of eight quality characteristics essential to a healthy church. The guidelines are based on an



international study conducted in 1,000 churches, 32 countries, and 6 continents. Together with your church's leaders, use these eight quality characteristics to assess your congregation's health.

### **BLUEPRINT FOR HEALTH: EIGHT QUALITY CHARACTERISTICS FOR EFFECTIVE SMALL CHURCHES<sup>2</sup>**

#### **Empowering Leadership**

*Definition:* Effective leadership begins with an intimate relationship with God, resulting in Christlike character and a clear sense of God's calling for a leader's life. As this base of spiritual maturity increases, effective pastors and leaders multiply, guide, empower, and equip disciples to realize their full potential in Christ and work together with them to accomplish God's vision.

*Example:* Pastor Pablo Contreras has a history of empowering leaders to pastor the churches he has planted. He has

found it is often more effective to plant more churches rather than trying to help existing churches grow larger. In his last congregation, he named Liandro, his assistant, as his replacement. This enabled Pablo to leave and begin a new congregation.

When Pablo began mentoring Liandro, Liandro was working in the marketplace as a manager. Many of his managerial skills were easily transferable to a ministry setting. A year after assuming the pastorate, Liandro is confidently leading his congregation, and Pablo has nearly 100 newly baptized Christians in his church plant.

#### **Gift-Oriented Ministry**

*Definition:* The Holy Spirit sovereignly gives spiritual gifts to every Christian to help build God's kingdom. Church leaders are responsible to help believers discover, develop, and exercise their gifts so

the body of Christ "grows and builds itself up in love." One of the best ways to tap into the potential of the small church is through gift-oriented ministry.

*Example:* A Spiritual Gifts Discovery workshop was offered in a congregation of less than 100 members. After taking a gift inventory, one woman realized the administrative skills that made her effective in her job could also be used in ministry. After a few months of planning, she launched a community outreach program designed to bring in unsaved teenagers from the neighborhood. Two years later, that church is still seeing the fruit of her efforts. Teenagers have been saved, and several parents have begun attending the church.

#### **Passionate Spirituality**

*Definition:* Effective ministry flows out of a passionate spirituality. Spiritual intimacy leads to a strong conviction that God will act in powerful ways. A godly vision can only be accomplished through faith that views obstacles as opportunities and turns defeats into victories.

*Example:* One church took passionate spirituality seriously and realized that most of the church membership had a deep desire for spirituality but little instruction about how to incorporate it into their lives. To address the need, a gifted leader in the church designed quarterly concerts of prayer where people could pray in small groups, worship together with those from other congregations, and listen to teaching on prayer.

#### **Functional Structures**

*Definition:* The church is the living body of Christ. Like all healthy organisms, it requires numerous systems that work together to fulfill its intended purpose. Each system must be evaluated regularly to determine if it is still the best way to accomplish a church's intended purpose.

*Example:* One old and struggling smaller church began evaluating its structures. The members discovered that many of the programs were ingrown and without a compelling vision. The options were clear: change to create a new vision or

### **BREAKING THROUGH THE SMALL-CHURCH MENTALITY: THE PASTOR AS THE KEY TO GROWTH**

Examine your motives: Why do you want to break the 100 barrier? If the answer is greater prestige, beware—the benefits are short-lived at best. More people? Remember that more people means more responsibility. Ultimately, the only adequate reason to break the 100 barrier is the desire to make disciples of those who are not yet believers. If you have a passion to make more and better disciples, God will be blessed and the Kingdom will advance.

Let God expand your vision beyond your local community. He desires to release your ministry to reach all kinds of people, language groups, and nations. Allow Him to develop a passion within you for people. Personal prayer effects a transformation in a pastor's life that will fix his or her attention on the concerns that move the heart of God. Prayer must be consistent, intense, and patient. Out of prayer comes holy work and holy effectiveness that can bring dramatic results (Matthew 16:18,19).

A burden for the lost is born out of prayer, but that burden must lead to intentional action—hands-on, need-oriented ministry. Study examples of mountain-moving faith, such as those found in Hebrews 11, while asking God to increase your faith. You will find that faith necessarily involves risk-taking (Ephesians 3:20,21).

To break out of the small-church mentality, pastors must often work to overcome personal blockages. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges a pastor faces is making the shift from being the shepherd of a flock to becoming a rancher of a herd. Making that shift requires allowing others to do the ministry instead of doing it all. Pastors must be willing to delegate pastoral responsibilities to other gifted individuals and recognize that there will be people within their congregation whom they do not personally pastor. In many cases, this will mean giving up the need to be needed.

We must become the kind of leaders who can see the vision, design an effective strategy for reaching it, and then mobilize our people to carry out that strategy. Consider the possibilities: If we knew we could not fail, what would God want to accomplish through us?

—Robert E. Logan, Los Angeles, California.

eliminate the program. The church leadership invested time, energy, and resources into the programs willing to change, while practicing the art of benign neglect with aging, inflexible programs. Ten years later, the result is viable and purposeful programs that impart life and vitality to the now-growing congregation.

### Inspiring Worship

*Definition:* Inspiring worship is an encounter with the living God. Both

meet individual needs, develop each person according to his or her God-given gifts, and raise leaders to sustain the growth of the church. Like healthy organic cells, holistic small groups are designed to grow and multiply.

*Example:* The strength of many smaller churches lies in the close relationships members often have with one another. A holistic small-group ministry seeks to ensure that those relationships are consistent and healthy. One small group began to grow rather large. When the group

## A godly vision can only be accomplished through an optimistic faith that views obstacles as opportunities and turns defeats into victories.

personal and corporate worship must be infused with the presence of God, resulting in times of quiet reverence and vibrant celebration. Inspiring worship is not driven by a particular style or ministry-focus group, but by the shared experience of God's presence.

*Example:* One town had two churches. The first was an older, more traditional church that met in a modest chapel. Hymns and a pipe organ contribute to the subdued worship atmosphere. The second church was contemporary. This church met in the town hall, people who attended dressed casually, and it had a band. Both churches had about 120 in attendance on a given Sunday.

When asked why they preferred one service over another, people in the town gave reasons relating to intimacy with God and the sense of inspiration they bring away with them at the end of the worship experience. Inspiring worship does not depend on whether the music is contemporary or traditional, but on whether people have a personal encounter with God.

### Holistic Small Groups

*Definition:* Holistic small groups are disciple-making communities that endeavor to reach the unchurched,

reached 18 to 20 people, they decided to multiply to maintain the atmosphere of intimacy and accountability that had made the group attractive in the first place. A couple that had been key players in the original group began to lead one of the new groups. Once every few months the two groups come together for a party to catch up with each other and reconnect.

### Need-Oriented Evangelism

*Definition:* Need-oriented evangelism intentionally cultivates relationships with pre-Christian people so they can become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ who actively participate within the life of the church and community. Using appropriate ministries and authentic relationships, believers can guide others into the family of God.

*Example:* A church in a rural area conducted a survey to discover needs in their community. One common theme that emerged was a sense of isolation among stay-at-home mothers. The church's outreach committee, comprised of three people, decided to create a program to address that need. They organized a once-a-week event where mothers could come together and socialize with each other and with mothers from the church. Volunteers

from the church provided childcare. The program quickly became popular, and the relationships that were formed provided avenues for sharing the gospel. Assessing, and more important, understanding the needs of the impact group, was crucial for this church to make strategic decisions along the way.

### Loving Relationships

*Definition:* Loving relationships are the heart of a healthy, growing church. Jesus said people would know we are His disciples by our love. Practical demonstrations of love build authentic Christian community and bring others into God's kingdom.

*Example:* One of the ways a particular church expresses love is in the context of small groups. The groups are where the people develop authentic community, care for and support each other, challenge each other to grow, and become better disciples. A single mother in one of the small groups was having trouble finding a stable job, a place to live, and care for her three children. Members of the church were quick to respond when they heard her story. Job offers, temporary housing, and childcare were soon made available. Concrete demonstration of love leaves no doubt about that church's commitment to loving relationships. 🍌

Robert E. Logan is executive director of CoachNet, Inc. Gary Reinecke is a ministry trainer and consultant with Strategic Ministries, Inc.



#### E N D N O T E S

1. Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (Carol Stream: ChurchSmart Resources), 46–48.
2. The eight quality characteristics are taken from *Natural Church Development*. The definitions come from *Releasing Your Church's Potential* (Carol Stream: ChurchSmart Resources).






A chalkboard with a drawing of a face made of chalk. The face has two large, circular eyes and two 'X' marks for a nose and mouth. A wooden pencil is drawn diagonally across the lower half of the board.

# TRANSITIONING— A STRATEGIC PLAN

B Y M I L T O N J . K R A N S





A pastor from one of the Southern states remembers two small towns that were an important part of his life as he was growing up.<sup>1</sup> After he had left that part of the country, he did not return for several years. When he did return, he made some interesting observations. One of these towns had changed very little. It was almost as he had remembered it as a child with one exception: all the marks of a dying town were evident. Businesses had closed; school buildings were unused; homes were vacant. The town had refused to change and, as a result, it was dying.

The second town was radically different. The old downtown area was closed; it had given way to new malls and shopping centers. New businesses had come to town. The town built new schools and new families had helped it become a growing town. Many of the old-timers were still there, and by working with the newcomers, the town was thriving and growing. This town had successfully transitioned.

The first town had refused to transition and had signed its death warrant. The second town was willing to change and will live on until another transition is necessary.

The church of Jesus Christ is facing a crossroad: will it transition and become more effective in reaching the unchurched, or will it stay traditional and unchanged and face inevitable decline and death? A large percentage of evangelical and Pentecostal groups in North America are made up of traditional small churches. Many of these small churches need to transition and become part of the quiet revolution happening across North America. They need to become purpose-driven by choice and conviction.

*(Continued on page 41)*

## REVITALIZING CHURCHES—A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The Church Planting Department of the Assemblies of God is committed to revitalizing declining and plateaued churches. The same principles used in planting successful, reproducing Kingdom churches are also used in restoring health and effectiveness to churches that have plateaued or are in decline.

Data from our Assemblies of God Statistician's office underscores the great number of A/G churches that are declining or plateaued. Comparing the same churches in reports from 1994 and 1999, 50 percent have grown 1 percent or more, 4 percent have not experienced any growth, and 46 percent have declined 1 percent or more.

During the last decade (1990–99), our Fellowship grew 20.4 percent in the number of adherents while the U.S. population gained about 10 percent. We are one of the few major Protestant denominations that experienced significant growth. But according to Charles Arn of Church Growth, Inc., “No county in the U.S. has a higher percentage of church people than it did 10 years ago.” The American Society for Church Growth also states, “Churches lose an estimated 2,765,000 people each year to nominalism and secularism.”

If a significant number of our churches could be turned around and become effective in proclaiming the gospel, what a difference it would make in our communities and churches.

Love for the lost, love for Christ, and love for our Fellowship compel us to do something different. Never has the scriptural injunction to “bear one another’s burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ” been more applicable than in helping plateaued and declining churches.

The Church Planting Department added a Revitalization/ReBoot track to our Church Planting BootCamps. The response has been far greater than we could have imagined.

At the Revitalization BootCamps, pastors learn from presenters who have successfully turned around churches and are passionate about helping pastors revitalize their ministries and churches. Each pastor learns about the life cycle of his or her church and how to restore it back to health. Additionally, each pastor is assigned a coach who helps him or her through the process of bringing change.

After BootCamp, districts, sections, and other churches are encouraged to form an ongoing partnership with each pastor for support and encouragement. This ongoing partnership empowers each pastor as he or she undergoes the difficult but worthwhile process of revitalization.

*—Paul Drost is director of the Church Planting Department, Springfield, Missouri.*

## THE NEBRASKA STRATEGY

Church revitalization has become a core value in the Nebraska District. For years we have been concerned about churches that have struggled to grow in quality and quantity. To address this, we designed an approach to help district-affiliated churches during pastoral transition.

The following is a brief description of the process a district-affiliated church goes through when seeking new pastoral leadership:

- Soon after the pastorate is vacant, a trained impact team meets with the entire congregation. This 2-hour meeting explores the strengths and weaknesses of the church from the members' perspectives and attempts to discern the kind of pastoral leader that would best complement the church and community.
- Pastoral candidates desiring to be considered for a district-affiliated church are required to go through an assessment that measures 13 qualities needed in a revitalization pastor.
- Candidates who score well on the assessment are interviewed and given opportunity to meet with the congregation for an interview and candidating service.
- If the congregation affirms the candidate, the district superintendent and presbyter make the pastoral appointment.
- As soon after appointment as possible, the new pastor is required to attend the Revitalization BootCamp.
- The district assigns the pastor to a trained pastor/coach for 24 months. The coach and pastor meet monthly for encouragement, prayer, accountability, and counsel.

This process takes considerable patience and determination on the part of the church, potential candidates, and district leadership. This intentional process helps revitalize churches that were on the decline.

*—Robert Nazareus is superintendent of the Nebraska District, Grand Island, Nebraska.*

## THE SOUTHERN MISSOURI STRATEGY

The Southern Missouri District has approached revitalization with two strategies:

First, a program called the Community Outreach Project provides a nationally appointed home missionary to work with smaller churches and help them better reach their own communities with the gospel. The objective is to bring the church to a fresh understanding of its reasons for being: to worship, evangelize, disciple, and fellowship. This approach is effective only if the pastor and congregation take ownership of the strategy.

Using revitalization assessment tools helps the missionary use his time, energy, and resources wisely. The missionary spends 1 to 3 months coordinating door-to-door evangelism, literature distribution, training the congregation, and mentoring the pastor. Other congregations are encouraged to help this church with activities, training, and possibly a facility facelift, such as painting and maintenance. Monthly commitments from churches in the district provide the finances to assist with these costs. When all the steps of the strategy are carefully followed, the product is usually a vibrant and growing congregation that is reaching the lost in its community.

A second approach provides the tools and information for presbyters, pastors, and coaches to oversee the revitalization task. Revitalization will, in most situations, require moving away from the status quo. Pastors and congregations must be willing to make necessary and sometimes painful changes to develop spiritual and relational vitality.

The district provides sectional and local church training to enhance leadership and pastoral skills. Continuing education and training are available on a regular basis without cost to pastors and church leaders. In addition, the Revitalization BootCamp provides an aggressive format to address the strategy and philosophy to produce turnaround churches. The BootCamp provides a unique environment for training and interaction that elevates the skills of the revitalization pastor. The BootCamp is also used to train revitalization coaches.

A trained coach is available to each pastor in the program. The coach provides encouragement, a candid evaluation of the progress being made, and accountability to the process. Coaching is a hands-on process of helping people succeed and reach their best potential. Where coaching has been done, whether intentional or not, success has followed.

Thriving churches are encouraged to partner with a revitalization church to provide encouragement, mentoring, finances, people, outreach, and facility improvements. Although this model is new, initial results indicate good progress.

The above strategies are voluntary. However, both strategies are more successful when initiated at the time of a pastoral change.

*—James G. McHaffie is world missions director for the Southern Missouri District, Springfield, Missouri.*

## THE WISCONSIN-NORTHERN MICHIGAN STRATEGY

A few years ago the Wisconsin-Northern Michigan District made a commitment to do what we could to revitalize declining or plateaued churches. We began what we call P.R.I.M.E.—Personalized Resources in Ministry Enrichment. P.R.I.M.E. is a team of dedicated ministers who help churches begin moving in a positive direction. We feel the churches we work with are prime for growth and God's blessings if certain principles are implemented. The following is an overview of this ministry.

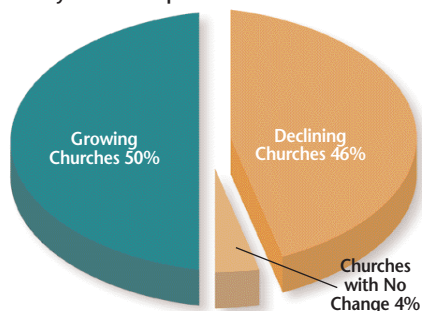
- The district superintendent selects project churches. Presbyters and others may make recommendations. The church is then designated as a ReStart church or a ReFocus church.
- The P.R.I.M.E. team evaluates the ministry of the project church and pastor. The team does not have authority over them, but may make recommendations deemed advisable, including a pastoral change.
- A ReStart church is treated similarly to a new-church plant. Usually a new pastor is selected with the assistance of an assessment team. The pastor is sent to the Revitalization BootCamp and assigned a coach. The church may be given financial assistance. Sometimes the church is closed, the buildings and property sold, and the new church relocated and given a new name.
- A ReFocus church often retains the same pastor, but includes more involvement by the P.R.I.M.E. team.
- Information is gathered via surveys, evaluations, and interviews with the pastor and congregation. The team evaluates video and audiotapes of services.
- The team meets with the pastor to discuss relevant results of surveys and evaluations, assist in goals/vision formation, and suggest resources and areas that need to be strengthened.
- The pastor may be sent to the Revitalization BootCamp.
- The team meets with the congregation to discuss appropriate findings. Processes that lead to decline or decline are explained. Assistance is given to develop action steps.
- A coach is involved in the process and is assigned to meet regularly with the pastor.
- A P.R.I.M.E. team member follows up with the pastor every 2 months. An exit interview is conducted after 6 months.
- After 1 year, a follow-up visit is recommended with the pastor and possibly with the congregation.

—Arden K. Adamson is superintendent of the Wisconsin-Northern Michigan District, Waupaca, Wisconsin.

(Continued from page 39)

Small and struggling churches no longer have to stay in a plateaued or declining state, regardless of their size. Many churches are growing as pastors lead their congregations through transition. (See pie chart below.)

**GROWING VS DECLINING CHURCHES:**  
Sunday AM Worship Attendance 1994 and 1999\*



\* Based on 7,489 Assemblies of God churches reporting an ACMR for both years.

What is transitioning? Transitioning involves a church and its staff who make changes where necessary—without violating biblical principles—so the church will grow by winning the unchurched to Christ. This takes leadership from the pastoral staff; it involves moving from what is not working to what does work.

### THE TRANSITIONING STRATEGY

One church that transitioned successfully suggests that transitioning is a multistep strategy. That strategy involves the following changes:

- Approach—From program-driven to purpose-driven.
- Target—From reaching the saved to reaching the unsaved and unchurched.
- Worship—From a traditional worship style to a contemporary worship style.
- Leadership—From a committee/deacon-led church to a staff-led church.
- Pastors—From a senior pastor model to multiple pastors/teams.
- Ministry—From staff doing the entire ministry to staff being equippers and lay ministers doing ministry.
- Strategy—From no systematic plan for reaching the lost to reaching, discipling, and developing them into lay ministers.
- Schedule—From worship on Sunday morning only to as many worship services as needed to win the unsaved and unchurched.
- Small Groups—From traditional Sunday school only to relational small

groups in Sunday school and at other times.<sup>2</sup>

These transitioning strategies may not be easy to accomplish, but the church that does transition can become effective in its community to win and disciple the unchurched.

The transitioning strategies listed in the sidebars accompanying this article present different ways national and district ministries are helping dying and plateaued churches turn around. The responsibility for transitioning is still the pastor's, but many districts have specific strategies to help pastors and churches in the transitioning process. **e**

Milton J. Krans is associate professor in the Bible and philosophy department at Evangel University, Springfield, Missouri.



### E N D N O T E S

1. Dan Southerland, *Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Change* (Littleton, Colorado: Serendipity House, 1999).
2. Ibid.







# Smaller Churches Can Do it Better— How To Take Advantage of Your Size

BY STEPHEN LIM



A golden balance scale is shown against a dark blue background. The scale's beam is tilted upwards on the left side. On the right pan, which is lower, sits a small, detailed model of a church with a steeple. The church model is primarily gold with some brown and white details. The scale's vertical post has several decorative spheres. The overall image has a grainy, pixelated texture.

**A large percentage of professional Christian  
workers, including as many as**

**80 percent of foreign missionaries,  
come from small churches.**

On nearly all relevant quality factors, larger churches compare unfavorably with smaller ones.”<sup>1</sup> Christian Schwarz came to this startling conclusion after the most comprehensive study of church growth ever conducted, covering over 1,000 churches on 6 continents. The research and observations of others, along with my experience, confirm its validity.

In spite of fewer people, staff, facilities, resources, and programs, the average small church produces:

- better fellowship.
- better pastoral care.
- better discipleship.
- more involvement in ministry.
- more persons called into Christian service.
- more spiritual harvest.

Not all smaller churches (99 or less in attendance) are doing well. Many are discouraged, struggling, or declining.

connected to everyone else. This is reinforced by the fact an average of 46 percent of their members belong to some kind of small group, compared to only 12 percent in megachurches. Larger churches strive to create a small-church atmosphere—something that naturally exists in most smaller churches.

#### **Better Pastoral Care**

In a small church, the pastor knows each member through spending time with him or her in varied activities.

At the beginning of my ministry, I pastored a small, home missions church in Los Angeles. Not only did I preach to the people, but I also worked with them on committees, visited their homes, and painted and scrubbed alongside them on workdays. Each week I drove youth and children to activities, and each season played on the church’s softball and basketball teams. I came to know the

the quality of our lives. “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ,” wrote the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 11:1\*). Being with people enables us to observe their progress and provide encouragement and correction. Caring and praying for their spiritual progress also motivates them to grow.

Discipling pays big dividends in the multiplication of ourselves through others. Aside from His itinerant teaching and healing ministry, Jesus spent 3 1/2 years discipling a congregation of 12 individuals. Empowered by the Spirit, these disciples launched the Church into 20 centuries of expanding harvest around the world. Usually the pastor must thoroughly disciple at least an initial group before they in turn can disciple others. In this, the small-church pastor—with fewer programs to oversee—has a clear advantage in time.

## **Small churches are 16 times more effective evangelistically than megachurches.**

Some are located in communities with diminishing population, while others are ingrown and complacent. Many pastors are tempted to quit if they could find other means to support their families. How can pastors of smaller churches deal with these realities and take advantage of their size?

My purpose in this article is to encourage the pastors of smaller churches by showing them how their size can help rather than hinder effectiveness in ministry.

#### **DOING IT BETTER**

Here are areas in which smaller churches often do better ministry than larger ones.

#### **Better Fellowship**

Many have noted the family-like relational dynamics in smaller churches, where everyone knows and feels

congregation thoroughly and soon became aware if anyone had a problem.

Pastors of large churches must spend more time in administration to keep their many programs running smoothly, and they often assume a CEO role. They can only befriend select members. With others in their congregation, they have limited acquaintance, if any.

#### **Better Discipleship**

Why are the 40 percent of Americans who attend church regularly making so little difference in our society? Dallas Willard considers the lack of genuine discipleship so obvious, he calls this problem “the elephant in the church.”<sup>2</sup>

Too often we have assumed that people are discipled because they have completed a 6-month course. A big part of discipling involves spending regular time with people so they can learn from

#### **More Involvement in Ministry**

Because the pastor is usually the only salaried staff in a small church, members know that if they don’t participate in ministry, it won’t get done. Even youth are encouraged to serve. Everyone feels needed. Willingness to learn by doing takes greater importance than the professionalism expected in larger churches. In small churches, an average of 31 percent of members serve in a ministry that fits their gifts, while only 17 percent do so in a megachurch.

When I began pastoring the church in Los Angeles, besides the children, 2 adults, 10 collegians, and 10 high school students comprised the congregation. Without exception, every one of them soon became involved in ministry.

#### **More Response to Christian Service**

As a new Bible college graduate, my

brother Dave began pastoring a 1-year-old home missions church in San Francisco. During his first 3 years, three youths felt God's call to ministry. One eventually went with her husband to a remote unevangelized island in the Philippines, where they helped hundreds become believers; another pastors a home missions church; the third serves on the faculty of Bethany College of the Assemblies of God.

This result accords with the observation of Ron Klassen and John Koessler, two experts on small churches: "A disproportionate percentage of professional Christian workers, including as many as 80 percent of foreign missionaries, come from small churches."<sup>3</sup> Why? Certainly the small church's personal pastoral care, discipleship, and opportunity for involvement in ministry contribute to this result.

### More Spiritual Harvest

This finding is the most surprising. Schwarz states clearly, "The growth rate of churches decreased with increasing size."<sup>4</sup> He reports the average percentage growth and numerical increases for different size churches over a 5-year period:

Church Size	Percentage Growth	Numerical Growth
1-99	63%	+ 32
100-199	23%	+ 32
200-299	17%	+ 39
300-400	7%	+ 25
Megachurches (average attendance 2,856)	4%	+112

Based on the ratio of conversions to members, Schwarz concludes that small churches are 16 times more effective evangelistically than megachurches.

Church growth expert Carl George corroborates. "In most cases...once a church passes 400...it tends to become a receptor church, with a high percentage (between 75 and 90 percent) of its newcomers being drawn from other smaller churches in the community.... Regrettably, very few...do their own soul winning or primary spiritual formation."<sup>5</sup>

Larger churches can offer more appealing programs, so believers gravitate to them. The bigger the church,

however, the more time and energy spent in caring for the sheep. Some larger churches, realizing that smaller churches reach proportionately more people, plant new churches.

### ATTITUDES NEEDED

Three attitudes help small churches utilize their unique dynamics.

#### Believe that God can use you.

Have faith that God will bless your ministry, and that small churches can do great things for God. This releases the Spirit to act in your situation.

#### Be a faithful servant.

God does not judge pastors by their numbers or achievements. After all, He provides the gifts, training, and opportunities. Rather, He calls each to glorify Him by faithfully serving wherever He chooses (1 Corinthians 4:2). "I have brought you glory on earth," Jesus prayed, "by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4). God's calling must take priority over our reputation and career.

#### Experience self-esteem as God's beloved child.

We feel discontent with a humble place

of ministry when we allow it to make us feel inferior. We seek greener pastures, mistakenly thinking this will produce a greater sense of self-worth.

From my youth I suffered from low self-esteem, which my meager circumstances as a pastor in Los Angeles compounded. *What do my peers in ministry think of me? What if my fellow graduates from college and seminary saw me now?* I winced whenever these thoughts arose. Years passed before I learned to fully claim my identity in Christ, though I knew it intellectually. When we find self-worth in who we are in Christ, we will be less concerned about where we serve.

### ACTIONS NEEDED

Small churches do not automatically do ministry better. Along with the right attitudes, pastors need to take appropriate actions to tap their advantages.

#### Find a niche.

If we spread limited resources and workers too thin, we will accomplish little. Instead, discover a few needs in your community that your members have the potential to meet. In Los Angeles, I concentrated on outreach to unchurched children and youth—areas



"That is so unethical."

in which our young workers excelled. By the fifth year, our average weekly attendance was 100 children and 100 youth.

#### **Use what you have.**

As a small-church pastor, I fantasized, *If only we had the funds and facilities of Church X, think of the programs we could run. What I could do if I had the staff and talent of Church Y.* We can only use what we have, however, not what we wish we had. Coveting breeds frustration.

Having fewer resources forces us to be more creative. Our church in Los

Angeles met in a rickety 80-year-old house—in which I also lived because of financial necessity. For Sunday school, after filling all the rooms, we used the front and back yards, the garage, and the cellar. Then we borrowed a neighbor's basement. Still we bulged at the seams. We were able to borrow the facilities of a church 10 miles away on Sunday afternoons, and we started a branch Sunday school. This resulted in our reaching even more children.

#### **Disciple and mentor a few key persons.**

Jesus showed us the wisdom of finding a few high-potential individuals (though His disciples didn't look it at the time) and pouring our lives into them. Note also Barnabas' ministry with Paul and Mark, and Paul's with Timothy and Silas. Ask yourself: *Who are the adults or youth whom God is calling me to shape spiritually?*

from developing the nurturing relationships we need to be effective in ministry. God has not called us to be Lone Rangers.

#### **Build a team.**

A ministry team provides built-in support. For this reason, Jesus sent out workers two by two. A team can also enable greater fulfillment and effectiveness, as each ministers in his or her areas of gifting.

Trying to be a jack-of-all-trades as a solo pastor can be frustrating, while limiting the use of our true gifts. Consider the ministries for which small-church pastors

## **While a small church may not be able to afford additional staff—even part-time—there are creative ways to build a ministry team.**

Anges met in a rickety 80-year-old house—in which I also lived because of financial necessity. For Sunday school, after filling all the rooms, we used the front and back yards, the garage, and the cellar. Then we borrowed a neighbor's basement. Still we bulged at the seams. We were able to borrow the facilities of a church 10 miles away on Sunday afternoons, and we started a branch Sunday school. This resulted in our reaching even more children.

*Are there one or two with leadership potential who I can mentor?*

#### **Develop a network.**

Frequently, small church pastors feel isolated. They need to seek other ministers for fellowship, support, and input. For specific issues, they can call pastors whom they respect for guidance. Usually these persons are quite willing to share their wisdom. We should not allow pride, self-sufficiency, or busyness to keep us

have responsibility—preaching, teaching, discipling, counseling, worship, administration, Christian education, youth, and children. Throw in maintenance, the Christmas program, and a building project, and the number of areas in which they feel incompetent balloons.

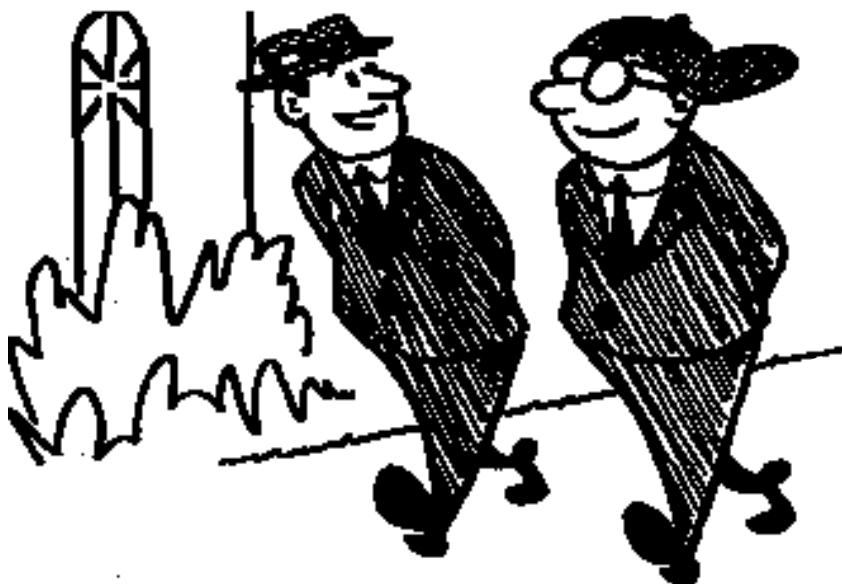
While a small church may not be able to afford additional staff—even part-time—there are creative ways to build a ministry team. With the human lifespan increasing, retirees may have many healthy years of volunteer service to offer God. Far more ministry students graduate from Bible colleges than can find salaried positions. If we communicate a credible vision and offer quality mentoring and opportunities for growth, some graduates may catch the vision, take a tent-making job, and join our team.

A bold option is for two or three ministers to share one salary and find tent-making jobs to supplement their income. This would be especially desirable in communities where an adequately staffed church has strong potential for growth.

#### **Grow in competence.**

Pastors of churches of all sizes need to regularly “sharpen the saw” by improving

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**“My hat goes off to any man who can preach a sermon that captures the undivided attention of the younger generation.”**

their skills, rather than persisting in using the same dull blade. "I'm too busy," is the usual excuse. However, setting aside an hour or two a week to learn is not a luxury, but a necessity. Lack of competence wastes time and breeds discouragement.

Buy, borrow, and share good books, magazines, and tapes on leadership and ministry. Some districts have these to loan. Make it a priority to attend ministers retreats. Districts may provide subsidies when needed. Presently, several districts have set up 1-day regional seminars every few months for ministerial enrichment. Ask your district to consider this. If possible, take undergraduate or graduate extension courses. The Assemblies of God Theological Seminary offers graduate studies in several locations. Schools offer assistance to needy students, which may make it financially feasible to enroll.

Pastoring small churches is hard work, but small churches have special dynamics for glorifying God. With the Spirit's enabling, small churches can do ministry better than larger churches. **e**

Stephen Lim, D.Min., has spoken at conferences in the United States, Canada, and Asia. He serves as associate professor of leadership and ministry at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri. He resides in San Francisco, California.



\*Scripture references are from the New International Version.

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1. Christian Schwarz, *Healthy Church Development* (Carol Stream: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996), 48. Unless otherwise stated, the statistics used come from this book.
2. Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1998), 301.
3. Ron Klassen and John Koessler, *No Little Places* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 86.
4. Schwarz, 46.
5. Carl F. George, *The Coming Church Revolution: Empowering Leaders for the Future*, (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1994), 37,38.

## STRENGTHENING THE STRUGGLING SMALLER CHURCH

### How Stronger Churches Can Help

While many smaller churches minister effectively, others struggle. Their pastors feel discouraged. If we truly strive to be a caring Fellowship, stronger churches need to help struggling, smaller churches, believing that God will bless them even as they bless others (Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6–8). Consider these attitudes and actions.

#### ATTITUDES THAT HELP

##### Build God's kingdom.

God calls us to build His kingdom, not our own. If we are not careful, we close our eyes to the plight of our brethren, concerned only that *our* ministry succeeds. God calls us to care for the health of Christ's body, the Church, not just our part in it.

##### Show honor.

Because our church is bigger or appears more successful does not mean we are superior. God has a purpose for smaller churches and their pastors. In our desire to help, we must avoid any semblance of a patronizing attitude. The apostle Paul instructs us, "Honor one another above yourselves" (Romans 12:10).

##### Don't foster dependency.

While we sincerely want to help, avoid developing a long-term dependency. The overseas churches of the Assemblies of God are thriving because of the indigenous principles encouraged by our missionaries.

#### ACTIONS THAT HELP

##### Pray.

New and struggling churches need our prayers. We must deploy spiritual weapons for spiritual warfare.

##### Provide monthly support.

A home missions pastor seeking to start or develop a church in an area with potential for spiritual harvest deserves support for a reasonable time until his or her church can stand on its own. Wise investment multiplies resources, as these churches in turn support missions.

##### Provide for pastoral enrichment.

Anointed competence produces fruitful ministry. Many smaller-church pastors serve on minimal incomes and have little in their budget for enrichment. You can help them grow in various ways: Have your church provide gift subscriptions to ministry magazines or free copies of books you have found beneficial. Send tapes of your sermons to those who want them to provide ideas and inspiration. Offer scholarships to leadership conferences. Most of these suggestions can be implemented at little cost, but will be a great blessing and show that you care.

##### Invite for a meal.

Your fellowship provides encouragement for those who may minister in relative isolation and shoulder burdens alone.

##### Send short-term ministry teams.

We send teams all over the world—why not send a team to a struggling, smaller church at a fraction of the cost? Staff and volunteers from your church can hold revival services, vacation Bible schools, and youth outreaches—provided adequate follow-up is available. A boost may be just what it needs, and this will energize your members in the process.

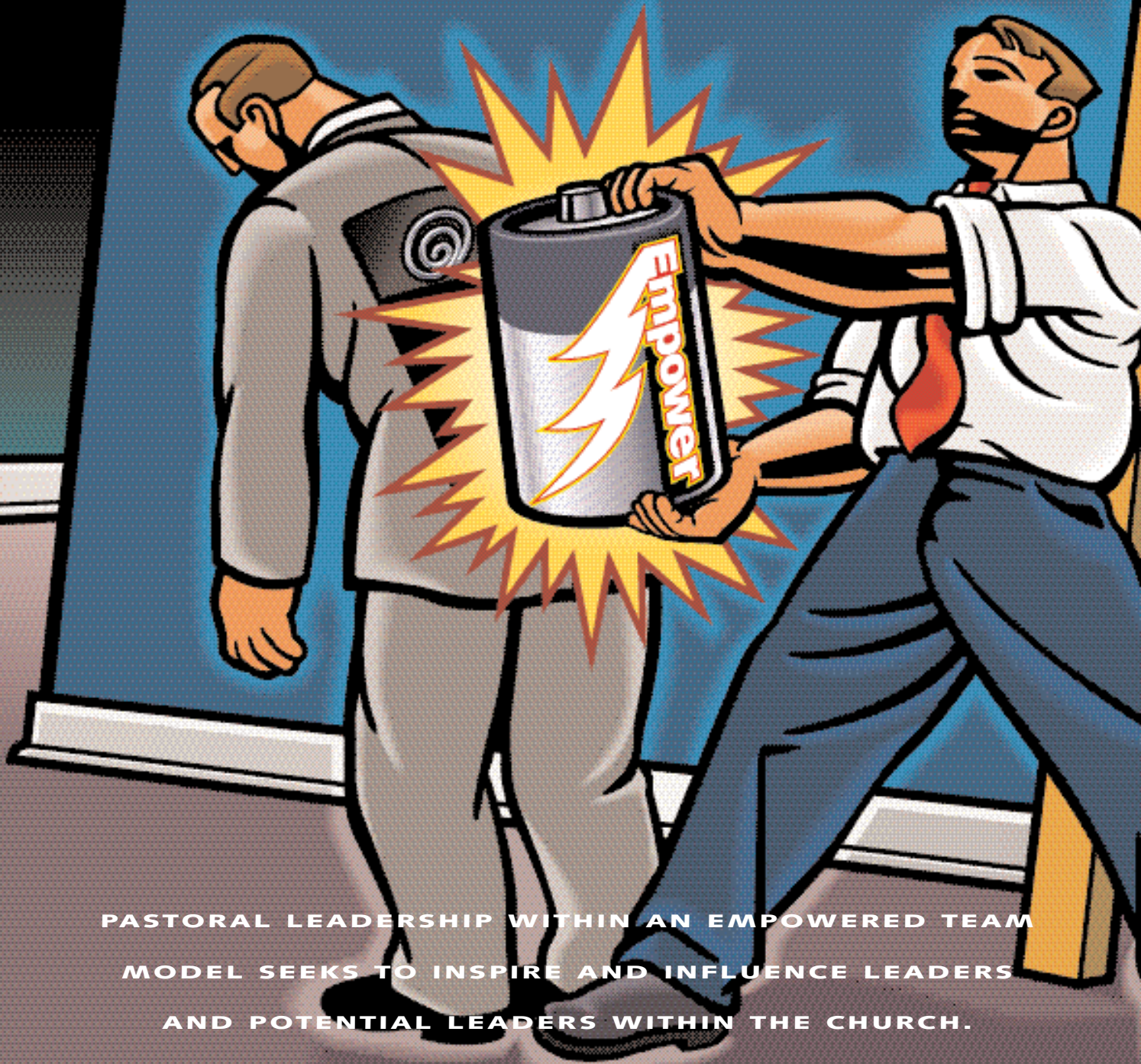
—Stephen Lim, San Francisco, California.







# Empowering Team Leaders IN THE SMALLER CHURCH



PASTORAL LEADERSHIP WITHIN AN EMPOWERED TEAM  
MODEL SEEKS TO INSPIRE AND INFLUENCE LEADERS  
AND POTENTIAL LEADERS WITHIN THE CHURCH.



Late Friday night the pastor turns to his wife and says, "I'm worn out; I can't go on like this. There's just too much work to do and too little of me to go around." Other pastors are trying to carry a leadership load that God never intended for one person to carry, not to mention an entire staff.

A few years ago I was facing the same dilemma with the same frustrations. As the new pastor of a church of 70 in a small Illinois town, I felt the tension between my deeply held convictions about building a team ministry and the reality of congregational expectations regarding pastoral leadership that had been formed over decades. Faced with these challenges, I was determined to broaden our leadership base through empowering others in the church and building an authentic team ministry.

Lack of financial resources for adding paid staff was never perceived as negative. In fact, it was one of our greatest assets—it forced each of us in that smaller church to ask himself or herself, *What can I do? What contribution can I make?* Through our efforts to follow Jesus' leadership model in training the Twelve, we witnessed a wonderful move of God as that small-town church grew from 70 people to almost 300 in average Sunday morning attendance in less than 3 years. Under the leadership of a new pastor, the church continues to grow and expand the witness of Christ throughout its community.

#### **FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO EXPANDING CHURCH LEADERSHIP**

One controlling factor that is central to any genuine move toward nurturing an empowered team ministry is a deep-rooted conviction that such efforts follow biblical principles. One could argue that throughout Christ's ministry an ongoing theme was His commitment to empower others and partner together in the ministry.

Caution must be exercised, however, in any attempt to shift our church structure away from the more traditional hierarchy model to an empowered team emphasis. First, we need to properly understand the essence of what the term *empowerment* means and then how it is applied within the concept of a shared or team-ministry approach. As one key leader writes: "Empowerment means removing bureaucratic boundaries that box people in and keep them from making the most effective use of all of their skills, experiences, energies, and ambitions. It means allowing them to develop a sense of ownership over parts of the process that are uniquely their responsibility, while at the same time demanding that they accept a share of the broader responsibility and ownership of the whole process."<sup>1</sup>

If we are committed to building a team-ministry model in the smaller church, then we are challenged as leaders of local churches to invest in the lives of those around us and empower them to function more effectively within their strengths, gifts, and passion. This is the launching point for developing an authentic team ministry. Unfortunately, the idea of creating these highly functional ministry partnerships in the church has often failed to embrace the core issues that are necessary to move lay leaders (or a pastoral staff) from the reality of individuality to the potential for authentic team ministry. Our challenge as leaders is to strive for the common commitment and high expectations called for in Christ's empowerment strategy for New Testament leadership in the church. The following principles focus on a few of the challenges facing pastors today in building team leaders.

#### **Committing Leaders to the Mission, Values, and Vision of Their Church**

One common denominator found in

churches that authentically embrace an empowered team-ministry focus is a high level of commitment by the leadership as it relates to the church's own sense of mission, values, and vision. Before a church can aggressively move toward developing empowered team leaders, there needs to be an initial process whereby these fundamental matters are crystallized. The result of this will be that personal "ownership over parts of the process...[and] ownership of the whole process"<sup>2</sup> will reside in the hearts and minds of every church leader.

As the church comes to a deeper understanding of its beliefs regarding the biblical mission of the church, its set of ministry values, and specific vision for the future, it is crucial that each leader (paid and volunteer) possess deep commitment to these three expressions of ministry. They form what I call the core of effectiveness and are at the heart of any effort to develop an authentic team-ministry focus in the small church. Failure to secure genuine commitment around these three concepts ultimately will compromise any well-intended efforts to move church leadership toward empowerment and shared ministry.

### Shifting the Pastor's Leadership Focus

The movement in ministry focus from a narrow to a broad-based team leadership model will call for certain adjustments in the leadership style of the pastor. At the heart of this leader shift is the need to focus less on *telling* and *doing* and more on *coaching* and *mentoring*. Pastoral leadership within an empowered-team model seeks to inspire and influence leaders and potential leaders within the church.

I identify five levels of personal influence that capture the essence of the leadership challenge facing pastors who seek to invest in helping transform church leaders and potential leaders from a committee member to a team player. Pastors need to influence others through: 1) *proclaiming* biblical truth regarding empowerment and team

ministry; 2) *modeling* these convictions as we live among our people; 3) *training* church members to better understand and appreciate the unique contribution each person can make; 4) *coaching* members by providing hands-on skill development and guidance in the transformation to an authentic team concept; and 5) *mentoring* certain individuals through more personal intervention in a highly relational manner (see graph below.)



The key idea for leaders to capture is this: Our influence is to be felt in the lives of other church leaders and potential leaders at all five levels. Greater amounts of our time should be given toward expanding our leadership influence as both coach and mentor within the emerging framework of empowered team ministry.

### Investing in Leadership Development

Leadership development is the final principle regarding empowering others as authentic team leaders. This gets to the heart of true change within our church organization: the need for a consistent effort to develop healthy, functioning team leaders in every area of ministry. Empowered team leadership does not happen automatically. Authentic team leaders generally do not emerge from within the church on their own. The final principle calls for a creative strategy to build leaders who will in turn build other leaders and expand the scope of personal impact.

Here we are challenged with the need to provide a variety of opportunities for leadership training to touch the

lives of those near us. This is especially important since the true quality of our leadership is best measured by observing the habits, values, and behavior of those church leaders who serve with us. Within the leader/follower relationship there is the ongoing need for both formal and informal leadership training. As leaders, it is important for each of us to think through our efforts to intentionally and consistently empower other leaders as we see ourselves as leaders/teachers who maximize every opportunity to invest ourselves in building the team.

### CONCLUSION

Pastors and other leaders in the church today face new challenges and confusing problems. Feelings of inadequacy and frustration often become difficult to suppress. God never intended for so many pastors to find themselves overwhelmed and overworked. But what can we do, especially if we are in a smaller church where finances are limited and strong leaders may be difficult to find? Perhaps we need to renew our commitment to increase our investment in the lives of those within the church and ask God to help us see the potential for authentic leadership within them. Then as we partner together, under the umbrella of true accountability, we can build an empowered team that will change lives and impact our community for the cause of Jesus Christ. **e**

John H. Spurling, D.Min., is associate professor of leadership and church health at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri, and founding partner of Leadership Development Resources.



### ENDNOTES

1. Warren Bennis and Michael Mesche, *The 21st Century Organization* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishing, 1995), 36.
2. Ibid.





MINISTRY IN THE SMALLER CONGREGATION

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BY GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS





# ow of a NT

*Some churches (like trees) grow tall.  
Their roots go deep.  
Unable to keep good news to themselves  
they spread their branches  
and boast their ripened fruit.  
“Great soil,” some say.  
“Gifted orchardist,” others add.  
In the shade of bigger trees,  
some find fault,  
and (blind to their call from God)  
blame those who onward grow.  
Others in the same shadows flourish  
(nourished by those nearby).  
Still others (withered) die.  
It’s a forest of many kinds.  
It’s a parable of choices.  
It’s a story bound to be repeated  
wherever churches grow.*

—Greg Asimakoupoulos

After accepting the call to an evangelical church in Naperville, Illinois, one of my members offered to drive me around town. He wanted to show me one of the successful ministries in the community. Calvary Church was not only the largest congregation in Naperville; it was one of the largest in the Assemblies of God.

“Here is where Calvary Church began,” he said, pointing to a small wood-frame building that looked like a typical Midwest church in the 1940s. From there we drove 2 miles to an attractive school-like facility that looked like it could accommodate several times more people. “This is Calvary’s second location. Their school still meets here.”

My eyes widened as I scanned the 10 acres on which the impressive-looking structure stood. I wasn’t sure I wanted to see the third and present site. I was already intimidated.

“This is where Calvary Church meets now,” Larry said, indicating an enormous brick complex. The impressive campus with a 50-foot high white cross was situated on 30 acres. He smiled. “Some church, eh?”

Although I politely concurred, inside I was struggling with a myriad of emotions. I had just moved my wife and three young daughters 2,400 miles to a place where I believed God wanted me to serve. We were missing family and friends. What had become familiar and secure was far away. I wondered how long it would take to become accepted by a new congregation. Now there were the feelings related to doing ministry in the shadow of a megachurch 5 minutes from the church I pastored.

## DEVELOP A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD MEGACHURCHES

Those who pastor a smaller church in close proximity to a larger church know the feelings I felt that day. "You can't avoid at times thinking, *What's wrong with me?*" admits Dave Huff, who pastors a small Baptist congregation in Naperville. "Though you look back to your call to ministry with varying degrees of confidence, the sense of inadequacy is overwhelming at times. Your significance is reduced in your own eyes by the mass migration of believers flocking to what is, in their minds, a more fulfilling ministry."

I found myself dealing with the same inner doubts. I knew I wasn't as gifted as Bob Schmidgall. He was an All-American quarterback. I wasn't even third string, let alone on the varsity squad. What I felt was akin to those days in grade school when we had to do the 600-yard run or walk. While my classmates, more athletically inclined, sprinted the whole way, I was winded after 200 yards. My face was red as much from embarrassment as it was from being chubby and slow. As I struggled to catch my breath, I gave in to feelings of inadequacy and failure.

In addition to an inferiority complex, I dealt with covetous feelings. I wasn't focusing on the Lord and His sufficiency to accomplish a fruitful ministry through me in a church where the pews were few. Instead, my eyes looked longingly at Calvary Church and their multimillion-dollar budget. The weeds of envy flourish in the shade of

dissatisfaction (especially if you water them with drools of desire). I had read articles that Bob Schmidgall had written for Christian magazines. To say I was impressed would be an understatement. What he had already experienced was the very thing I'd dreamed of doing.

My feelings about Calvary Church began to change within a month of my arrival in Naperville. On the Sunday I was formally installed as pastor, a bouquet of flowers arrived. The tag attached to the arrangement of mums read, "Welcome to our community. May your ministry grow with fragrance and beauty." It was signed by Bob and Karen Schmidgall. What a magnanimous gesture from someone who didn't have any cause to know who I was. I began to question my premature judgment of a man and a ministry I really didn't even know.

Two weeks later I attended the monthly luncheon of the local ministers. Who was the convener? None other than Bob Schmidgall. As I walked up to introduce myself, I was conscious of how large a man he was. His stature seemed appropriate, given the size of his church. As I stood in his shadow, dwarfed by his presence, I didn't feel insignificant. It was obvious that Bob was not impressed by his own press clippings. He put on no airs. He was no different than the other 20 of us (except for the fact his congregation was 20 times larger). He took the initiative to neutralize the acid of comparison that had been bubbling continuously in my belly. And I was grateful.

Another step I took to get beyond my own feelings was along the path of partnership. I asked Bob if he would speak at our annual stewardship banquet. He graciously agreed. My willingness to approach him as a colleague and not as a threat released envy's stranglehold. In turn, Bob asked me to preach at an evening service. His overture of collegiality was unexpected, but welcomed. When he introduced me to his congregation, he called me a good friend. As he spoke those words, whatever jealousy continued to cloud my perspective quickly evaporated. (Large church pastors, take note. You have the power to release smaller church pastors from the suffocating hold of jealousy by simply befriending them and treating them as equals.)

## RECOGNIZE THE BENEFITS OF PASTORING NEAR MEGACHURCHES

By the time I'd been at my church a year, I had come to appreciate some of the unique opportunities pastors who are overshadowed by megachurches enjoy. In the heat of ministry I found it refreshing to be in the shadows. Smaller church pastors don't feel the same pressure to live up to unrealistic expectations as do prominent pastors. They don't have to give in to the same demands to impress a community of onlookers. I relaxed in being myself. There was an indescribable joy in ministering to those who faithfully attended week after week. The fact these committed members were there because they wanted to hear me preach compensated for the public adulation that was lacking.

"Large church pastors don't know how 'cool' it is to be able to call each person in the congregation by name," observes Craig Blair, who pastors Central Church across town from Calvary. "There is a depth of ministry that can only occur when your church is a certain size. When you can enter into the individual hopes and dreams as well as the hurdles and nightmares of your people, you have the opportunity to express the shepherding love of God tangibly."

Another benefit of ministering in the shadows is the impetus to keep striving

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**"I'm sorry, Pastor, but that wasn't a standing ovation. Our Billy let his hamster loose under the pews."**



and strategizing to grow. Large churches that have reached a certain level of attendance may not feel as motivated to reach out. While they do have increased budgets to meet and programs to staff, they may sense that they have already reached a plateau of purpose on which they could graze indefinitely.

"When you are a small church, you don't have the luxury to think you have arrived," Dave Huff adds. "Your survival depends on staying focused and on your knees. When you don't have many members, you discover flavors of God's faithfulness you didn't know existed. You also have the freedom to fail that bigger congregations don't have."

Although change in smaller churches can be resisted by power brokers who claim ownership of the congregation, this isn't always true. The freedom to try the new approaches Dave Huff speaks of is a definite benefit that goes with pastoring smaller congregations. In our church we experimented with service times, approaches to adult Sunday school, and evening service format (traditional services at church or fellowship groups in homes). Since not many attended anyway, we didn't feel the constraint of blindsiding scores of visitors who had read a schedule in the yellow pages. When it comes to trying on new garments of ministry, smaller is beautiful.

Shadow churches have reason to celebrate the giants that shield them from the sun. Beside the benefits that are unique to their size, there are definite benefits smaller churches derive from their proximity to larger churches. Rick Ezell, who pastors the Southern Baptist church across the street from Calvary Church, has discovered this first hand. "A church like Calvary raises the level of interest in church attendance. Because it has so much going on, those who think of churches as boring, lifeless places have reason to change their uninformed opinions. We benefit from people who have decided going to church is a good thing to do after all."


Meanwhile, at the church I was pastoring, a string of people who had previously attended Calvary started to

come—a big church was not the ideal fit for them. Because there was a megachurch in our area and they had attended it, they knew what they preferred. We benefited from the fact Calvary was in close proximity to our church. Those who transferred their membership did not leave Schmidgall's congregation because they were upset or angry. Rather, they came because they decided that a small church would be a better place for them to thrive. Unlike some megachurches, we didn't insist on passing an audition to sing in the choir. There were ready openings to teach Sunday school and children's church. My wife and I could accept invitations for dinner after church the very week the invitation was extended. Our schedules were not booked for several Sundays in advance.

Another way bigger churches shield smaller ones is in the way they contend with city hall on regulations that impact religious institutions. The Nazarene church in Naperville is a thriving congregation that once struggled in the shadow of Calvary. After it began to experience dramatic numerical growth, the church's attractive but modest facilities needed to be expanded. The excitement of the building program was curtailed a bit when the building committee discovered the city was assessing a hefty fee for increased traffic on the road in front of the church. Seeking a convincing argument for the rationale of the fee, the church leadership challenged the city. At the rate the church was growing, the traffic leading to the Nazarene church on Sunday mornings was noticeable. But it was not nearly as congested as morning and evening commute-hour traffic on Monday through Friday. After much deliberation the city council waived the fee. What is more, the Nazarene church's challenge set in motion a reconsideration of fees churches had been routinely charged. Smaller churches that had previously gone through building programs were issued rebate checks.

On a more practical level, smaller

churches can be the direct beneficiaries of the community-wide ministry larger churches make possible. Calvary Church routinely brings in big-name Christian performers for citywide concerts. As pastor, this did not threaten me. I freely promoted the concert and chose to attend with members of our congregation. Calvary also hosts the Christian College Fair for high school students in our area. Admissions counselors from Christian schools all over the country help guide college-bound students to find God's choice. I was grateful that we had a church in our town that could accommodate such an important event. The same gratitude could be given to the megachurches that host church-growth conferences, area Sunday school conventions, major youth rallies, and continuing education seminars for pastors.

I was traveling in North Carolina when I got a call informing me that Bob Schmidgall had died of a heart attack at 55. I couldn't believe it. I'd seen him just a few days before. We'd had coffee in the very restaurant in which he died. I was numb inside. The man I had once envied who had become my friend was dead. As I sat among 4,000 other mourners who attended Bob's funeral at Calvary Church, I sensed the presence of the Lord in a profound way. My friend Bob was gone, but the Lord had allowed him to hang around long enough to help me gain a God-honoring perspective about pastors and churches with major league reputations. Singing praise songs and listening to Dick Foth, Rich Wilkerson, and others, I realized I was not among strangers. The members of Bob's church were brothers and sisters. We were all part of God's family. My church was not in competition with Calvary. We were branch offices of the same enterprise. Calvary's was just a bit bigger with a larger staff. 

*Greg Asimakoupoulos is a former pastor and a freelance writer who lives in Naperville, Illinois.*









# OVERCOMING DISCOURAGEMENT in the Smaller Church


**GOD HAS QUITE A DIFFERENT ASSESSMENT OF CHURCHES THAT SEEM**

**SUCCESSFUL AND RICH IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD. IT IS SOMETIMES THE**

**SMALLER, STRUGGLING, BARELY HOLDING ON, YET FAITHFUL CHURCHES**

**THAT RECEIVE HIS COMMENDATIONS AND HIS PROMISES.**

**BY STEVE R. BIERLY**



**D**iscouragement seems to be an occupational hazard for most pastors. If discouragement was experienced to some extent by Moses (Numbers 20:1–13), Elijah (1 Kings 19:1–18), and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:7–18), what makes you think you'll be immune? There are, however, types of discouragement that are unique to, or perhaps more acutely experienced by those involved with ministry in the smaller church.

#### **DISCOURAGEMENT THAT COMES FROM WASTING TIME**

Chances are you entered the ministry because you love leading worship, desire to preach and teach the Word, long to make a difference in this world for the Kingdom, or want to reach the lost with the gospel. However, because smaller-church pastors are at the epicenter of the congregation's life, and manpower is scarce for needed tasks, these pastors often spend much of their time acting as church secretary, performing janitorial duties, taking elderly parishioners to medical appointments when their children are too busy, attending committee meetings, and chaperoning youth-group outings. These are not the activities pastors dream about doing. It often seems as if God may not be that great of a stewardship expert if He deploys gifted people in this manner.

There's a cliché, "The devil is in the details." But to gain the victory over discouragement in ministry, it's helpful to remember that it is God who is in the details. You may not relish spending time typing, copying, and folding the bulletin. But providing a Sunday morning bulletin means the service will be

conducted decently and in order, and people will get a chance to read about opportunities for growth and ministry in your church. Maybe you have to turn up the heat and unlock the door every week for the Boy Scouts meeting. Remember, you are showing young people that the church cares about them, and in the process you might have the opportunity to meet some who wouldn't otherwise come to church.

When looked at from a positive perspective, we will understand that some tasks we may consider menial or beneath us are as important as writing a new Bible study. Jesus wasn't above washing feet (John 13:1–17), and He said those who follow Him must be willing to do the same.

#### **DISCOURAGEMENT THAT COMES FROM HAVING IDEAS FAIL**

The smaller-church pastor who goes to an evangelism or church growth conference and comes home brimming over with new ways the congregation can reach out into its community is likely to

be heading for a fall when he or she presents the plans to the board. Most of those ideas will go nowhere because a smaller church isn't purpose-driven; it is tradition-bound. It isn't really interested in doing something different. Instead, it seeks to preserve the status quo. And it certainly isn't going to take any action that will upset anybody, particularly the "right" anybodies.

Many pastors faced with these realities give up on presenting new ideas. There's no point in dreaming dreams for a congregation that is perfectly content to go nowhere. But without a vision, the pastor perishes. There's nothing that brings discouragement quicker than feeling you are stuck, without any hope of progress or improvement.

The notion that smaller churches will never change, though, is a myth. They don't want change that seems forced on them by an outsider or imported from an alien culture like a megachurch. To bring about change in a smaller church, you must work on becoming an insider. And this takes time—time spent making

small talk with your people, going on picnics together, listening to the history of your congregation, and being seen in the community. Even though it is not time spent on church growth, per se, it will pay off in dividends later.

Since the smaller church is tradition-bound, new ideas must be tied to its traditions. Preface your ideas with statements as: "This church has never said no to a worthwhile mission. Here's one that's come to my attention." Or, "I've been told that this church was filled to the rafters on Sunday mornings when beloved Pastor Smith was here. There's a new outreach program that the Lord may use to cause it to happen again." Or, "The youth fellowship used to be strong here, so let's see what we can do to build it back up."

Get the influential people in the congregation behind the new ideas. Have them read the articles and books that inspired you and ask for their opinions. Plant seeds in their hearts by putting challenging one-liners in the bulletins and church newsletters. Run your proposals by them first, even before making official presentations to the board. Whenever possible, let them carry the ball and be the spark plugs that will ignite change.

Progress is possible in the smaller church, but it requires the leader to be patient, and as wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove. And it definitely requires faith. If the Lord can turn a king's heart any way He pleases, then He can move within the hearts of your people.

#### **DISCOURAGEMENT THAT COMES FROM BEING OUT OF THE SPOTLIGHT**

Churches with innovative programs, or those that are bursting at the seams with unprecedented growth, get all the press. No one is interested in doing an article about a congregation that is doing business as usual. This can cause smaller-church pastors to despair, not because they pridefully want attention, but because they are tempted to buy into the idea that the action is elsewhere—and, therefore, God is elsewhere.

### **FELLOWSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY WITH OTHER PASTORS**

Loneliness is a very real cause of discouragement and depression for smaller-church pastors. Often they are ministering in small towns with close-knit groups where everybody else has grown up together and knows one another. Pastors are the outsiders.

Pastors can offset some of the loneliness by meeting regularly with other ministers in their geographic areas, even ministers of different denominations. All it usually takes to get a fellowship group started is the willingness to pick up the phone and call around to see if there is any interest. Even pastors ministering in very remote locations can meet with their peers via conference calls, chat rooms, E-mails, and snail mail.

It is important that your group agrees on a purpose for its meetings. The purpose may be something as simple as going around the table and giving everybody 10 minutes to talk about how things are going and share prayer requests and praises, or it may be something a little more structured, such as reading a book and discussing it. But it is important that the members of the group hold each other accountable to make each meeting productive. Otherwise, busy pastors will drop out and the group will die for lack of interest.

Accountability for the meetings is the start of brothers and sisters holding one another accountable for promises made to confront problems, deal with personal sins, and get one's spiritual life back on track between meetings. A smaller-church pastor doesn't have a staff to do this. He or she needs to rely on other pastors for exhortation, support, and encouragement.

—Steve R. Bierly, Hull, Iowa

A cure for this kind of discouraging thinking is to read Revelation 2 and 3. God has quite a different assessment of churches that seem successful and rich in the eyes of the world. It is sometimes the smaller, struggling, barely holding on, yet faithful churches that receive His commendations and His promises. This is not to say that all successful churches of today are of the devil, or that God smiles on every dwindling congregation, but it should make you think twice about judging a church's worth based on how much good press it gets. And it should challenge you to make sure you work on building in your congregation the things God is looking for—love toward Him and others, faithfulness during hard times, sound doctrine, holiness, and dependence on Him.

#### DISCOURAGEMENT THAT COMES FROM WAITING

It seems to take a long time for anything to get done in a smaller church. One reason is that members of the congregation don't usually hold one another accountable. "So what if Mary promised to research new Sunday school material? We all know she's been having trouble with her teenage daughter."

"John hasn't painted the back stairs yet, but that's just the way John is."

Another reason is this: If change is to become acceptable, it must be introduced gradually. It has to be gingerly tried on for size to see if it really fits the group and the way the group has done things for so long. But the Bible says, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick" (Proverbs 13:12, NIV). So how can you keep your heart healthy while laboring where gratification is delayed?

You must learn to rejoice in the baby steps the congregation takes. No parent despises a toddler who can barely make it across a room because he can't yet run a marathon. Rather, the parent calls Grandma and giddily announces what the baby has done. A leader must take pleasure in what a church accomplishes, and not focus on how great a distance it must still travel. It is as hard for a tradition-conscious, backward-looking group

to implement change as it is for a young child to stand up and take those first halting steps.

You want the services in your smaller church to be more seeker sensitive. But after the board listens to you, they only decide to put the page number of the Scripture reading in the bulletin and make sure there are signs in the hall that clearly point the way to the bathrooms. Don't get down. At least the church has taken a step in the right direction.

When it comes to lighting a fire under workers in the church, be careful. As John Maxwell often says, "Pastors are in the people business, not the program business." He and other church-growth experts remind us that in the church everything rises and falls on leadership. The smaller-church pastor exercises leadership by concentrating on building relationships. The congregation will never follow you if they feel you don't like, love, or understand them. Therefore, if the new hymnal committee hasn't yet had a chance to meet (even though it's been 2 months since they've been organized), and you patiently bear

with them, you are showing your people you care about them. This does not mean that you should not teach and model responsibility for your congregation and at times challenge their priorities, but do it with a gentle spirit, with an eye to helping them be all they can be, rather than with annoyance over the way they delay your plans. The things you do with a servant's heart are what count if you want to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant," when you meet your Master. **E**

Steve R. Bierly is pastor of American Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa, and is a conference speaker/seminar leader and an author. Steve has written *Help for the Small Church Pastor: Unlocking Your Congregation's Potential* (Zondervan, 1995), *How To Thrive As a Small-Church Pastor: A Guide to Spiritual and Emotional Well-Being* (Zondervan, 1998), and contributed to "Building Church Leaders: Your Complete Guide to Leadership Training" (Christianity Today, 1998).



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# EVANGELIZING



B Y R O N B L A U V E L T

Many people consider smaller churches a dying breed. In some of these churches, apathy has replaced the fire of God that once burned in the hearts of the people. Other smaller churches are simply marking time until they close their doors. Yet, there are some churches in smaller communities that are alive and well and reaching people with the

**2. How long am I committed here?** Too many pastors and congregations only plan for the short term and really don't expect to succeed.

**3. How much energy am I willing to dedicate to this calling?** Smaller communities demand the same level of commitment as larger ones.

**4. If I were God, would I enlist me**

lived more than 50 miles from the church), had banquets and steak cookouts, did door-to-door visitations, and other outreaches. Each community is unique, and churches need to keep the local culture in mind when planning events. However, pastors and churches must not hesitate to try something new. Most of the kids we bussed to church

# the Smaller Community

gospel. What makes the difference? A church that is growing has a vision, a plan, and a Holy Spirit anointing.

The ordinary world is looking for an unordinary church. Whether you live in a major metropolitan area or in a small community, much of the unchurched population is not interested in business as usual found in today's churches. Many unsaved people have concluded that the church is not relevant to their lives or their families.

## A VISION

Evangelizing smaller communities presents challenges. Only those who have pastored in such settings can fully appreciate the extent of those challenges. Our first pastorate was in Thedford, Nebraska, population about 235. Approximately 850 people lived in the county. This made growing the church even more challenging.

Our church had been in existence for over 60 years and the general consensus among the members was that our area was burned over. One of the secrets of moving the church forward was to expand the perimeters of ministry, tear down the old boundaries, and enlarge the vision.

Four questions need to be answered when charting a course for growth in smaller communities:

**1. Why am I here?** Is this God's appointment for me? If it is, then approach it with the same enthusiasm as if you had been called to a larger church.

**in this work?** Be objective. If you are weak in any area, make an effort to correct this weakness.

## A PLAN

Five characteristics of a successful evangelistic church are: doing everything with excellence, being creative, being relational, having uniqueness, and having a focus.

### Excellence

Look at your church's facilities to see what image you are projecting to the community. If you were new in town and looking for a church, would you consider yours? Some churches in smaller communities look like 20 years have passed since anybody really cared about the facilities and grounds. Mow the grass and weeds, apply some fresh paint, put up a new sign, do some landscaping, lay new carpet, and don't forget the restrooms and nursery. Invite a pastor or businessman from a successful church to evaluate your facilities and make suggestions.

Excellence is mandatory in everything. Your advertisements, special events, music, and yes, pastor, your messages must be the best you can accomplish.

### Creativity

Pastors and churches need to be creative in reaching smaller communities. In Thedford, we used tent meetings, bussed kids from country schools for Royal Rangers and Missionettes (some

are now a sizeable portion of the youth group).

Tent meetings require considerable effort, but are productive if they are properly promoted. Professional-quality flyers need to be distributed to every household within a 30-mile radius. Schedule singers known to the local residents and a speaker who fits the culture. Be well organized. Have friendly greeters and be ready to counsel and pray with those who come to the altar.

Banquets are another tool to draw the unsaved and unchurched. Decorate with excellence. Sweetheart banquets can be exquisite. Small-town people like to go to nice things and will encourage their friends to come next time.

### Relational

Summer and fall are good times for steak cookouts. Associate them with an Independence Day service or a fall festival. The people in our area were reluctant to come to a free dinner, but they willingly came when we served a 12-ounce sirloin with baked potato, tossed salad, roll, and drink for \$4. These occasions should not be used as fund-raisers, but rather as opportunities to meet new people and build relationships.

Building relationships is vital in the small community. People know each other and show concern for one another. The pastor and church must build solid relationships before they can reach their town. The adage, "I want to see how you walk before I listen to what

## 30 QUESTIONS A SMALL-TOWN PASTOR NEEDS TO ASK

I have identified three sets of questions to ask about your community, the people, and the place of your church in the community. When you find answers to these questions, you will be happier about where you are; you will be more accepted; and you will be more effective in evangelism.

### YOUR COMMUNITY AS A PLACE OF HISTORY AND PEOPLE

1. *How did the community come to be?* What was the founding dream? What was the covenant on which the community was built—utopia, commerce, resource exploitation, safety, freedom, or the good life?
2. *What is its focal symbol?*—The courthouse square, grain elevator, mine tippie?
3. *What is its chief economic function?*—Farm trade, marketing, government service, recreation/retirement, college, transportation, bedroom community, or institution? Often this is integrated with the dream and the symbol.
4. *Who are the honored, despised, lovable, and marginal people of the town?*
5. *What worldviews, values, and norms inform the everyday life of the residents?*
6. *What cultural, racial, and ethnic groups are present in your community?*
7. *What barriers separate people/groups of people?* Race, religion, education, social status? Are they visible or invisible?
8. *What are the sins/hurts of the community?*—Loss of an industry, a disastrous flood, a lynching?
9. *What has become of its sons and daughters?* Often people and communities feel vindicated by the success of the children in the larger world.
10. *What is the people's perception of the place and their awareness of other's perception of it?*
11. *Does the community have distinct sub-communities?* In a big small town, some folks will not attend a big "first" church for social and cultural reasons.
12. *What seems to be the future of the community?*—Who is responsible for dreaming/implementing?
13. *You need to know and appreciate the story of the community.* You need to come to own it and become a part of it.

### YOUR COMMUNITY AS A PLACE OF PROCESS

Every community has a set of relationships, rituals, and rhythms. Most events don't just happen. These questions will help you discover why things happen as they do.

1. *What are the magnets of the community? What places, activities, and events draw people?*
2. *What is the rhythm of everyday life?*
3. *What are the corridors or patterns of movement around the place?*
4. *How are decisions made? Who are the powerbrokers? What was their route to leadership? Who are the movers and shakers?*
5. *What are the routines of everyday encounters and conversations?*—Greeting, teasing, conducting business, courting, making requests, leave taking? What are the taboos?
6. *How do people make a living? What is the routine or rhythm of their work?*
7. *How does the community relate to other communities in its region?*—Dominance, conflict, subordination?
8. *When, where, and how do the residents play? What are the annual events?*
9. *How does the community assimilate new people?*

### THE PLACE OF YOUR CHURCH IN THE COMMUNITY

Your church has a place in your community. Learning what it is will help you see if your church is what God wants it to be in that place.

1. *What role does your church play in the community?*—Leader, cooperator, secondary? Dominant, denominational representation, or distinctive?
2. *What kind of reputation does it have?*—Friendly, aloof, rich, middle-class, poor, formal, ordered, informal, loving, conflicting, combative, community-serving, self-serving?
3. *What is the relationship between your church and other congregations in the community?*
4. *What community resources are available to assist your church in doing ministry?*
5. *What ministries, programs, events, and activities in the community receive the support of your church?*
6. *What community leadership roles do active members of your church fill?*
7. *How does the community relate to your congregation?*—Embraces, holds at a distance, rejects?
8. *Does your church seek to serve or to dominate the life of the community?*

—Gary E. Farley is partner in the Center for Rural Church Leadership. He can be contacted at: [gfarley@pickens.net](mailto:gfarley@pickens.net).

you say," is true in small-town America.

Sitting with the locals early in the morning at the coffee shop is a way to find acceptance in your community. Many unsaved people think pastors are remote and untouchable and feel nervous until they get to know them. Make regular stops at all of the businesses. School activities provide opportunities to demonstrate your desire to be a part of the community and meet new people.

While pastoring at Thedford, I attended 15 or more brandings (branding calves on the ranches) each year. If you live in a farming area, help in the fields. Go after the leaders in the community and school system. Concern and integrity must be in every aspect of your life.

### Uniqueness

According to Barna Research, our world makes significant changes every 5–7 years, while the average church makes a significant adjustment every 25–30 years. Is it any wonder that many churches are out of touch and considered irrelevant in a fast-changing, high-tech society? "We've always done it this way" is a sure sign we have dropped out of the race.

Our churches must be in touch with the culture. Find your niche and capitalize on it. Churches may need to update the music, add a band or orchestra, go after young couples, singles, or teens. Present the gospel through park services for kids and youth. For others, developing a bussing program will make you unique in your community. If you have older adults, organize tours or become the leader in providing special events and projects for seniors. Becoming active and visible may distinguish you from the other churches.

### Focus

Without vision, people perish. Vision creates focus. Vision must be translated into action, and constructive action is impossible without focus. Walk the streets of your community; drive the

roads of your countryside until a passion for the people in your community awakens you each morning.

A critical issue in many small-community churches is breaking free from tradition. We are a Movement, not a monument. It is not how far we have come, but rather where we are going. Keep in mind that it is the message, not the method, that is sacred.

### A Holy Spirit Anointing

Get alone with God so your ideas can be coordinated with His. You and your congregation must become involved in active prayer. Your efforts will fail without the Holy Spirit's direction and anointing.

In the early days of Pentecost, people came to our churches because they were tired of the status quo and were looking for life in the church. Today we have a different generation, but people are still looking for a church that is alive and progressive.

Two years ago at a district council a speaker said his church prayed for 2 years for revival. One night the Holy Spirit spoke to him: "I can't send a revival until you are willing to let me color outside of your lines."

Our traditions can program the Holy Spirit right out of our services. Our focus should not be to mimic a revival in some other part of the country; we


need to pray for one that will change our church and our area.

### CONCLUSION

God wants to use you to touch your community with the gospel. As you minister in the smaller church and community.

*Be a changer.* Take the lead in bringing harmony and fellowship among the churches in your community. The unchurched are sometimes mystified by the divisions among God's people. You will gain a new level of respect and admiration, making it much easier to evangelize.

*Be a leader.* Act like a leader, and it will not be long until your community accepts you as such. Exercise wisdom; get out among the hurting, the seeking, and the lost. Jesus never set up His office in the temple; He went to where the people were.

*Do not despair over interruptions.* Some of the most important ministries of our Lord were the result of interruptions. In smaller-community ministry, many people will drop by the church unannounced. Capitalize on these interruptions to provide caring counsel and to share the love of Christ. 

Ronald Blauvelt is senior pastor, Faith Assembly of God, Casper, Wyoming.



**"It's casual FRIDAY, not casual SUNDAY."**

# Managing Conflict in the Smaller Church

Yesterday, some people from your congregation robbed you of your joy, your peace, and several of your productive hours. Last night they robbed you of your sleep. Today you are miserable and despondent. Yes, those people in your congregation who are in conflict are thieves. They are also people you love. They are people whom God has called you to build up, strengthen, and bring to a place where they can do the work of ministry.

This article will help you find ways to ease the pain of conflict and generate good health in your life and congregation.

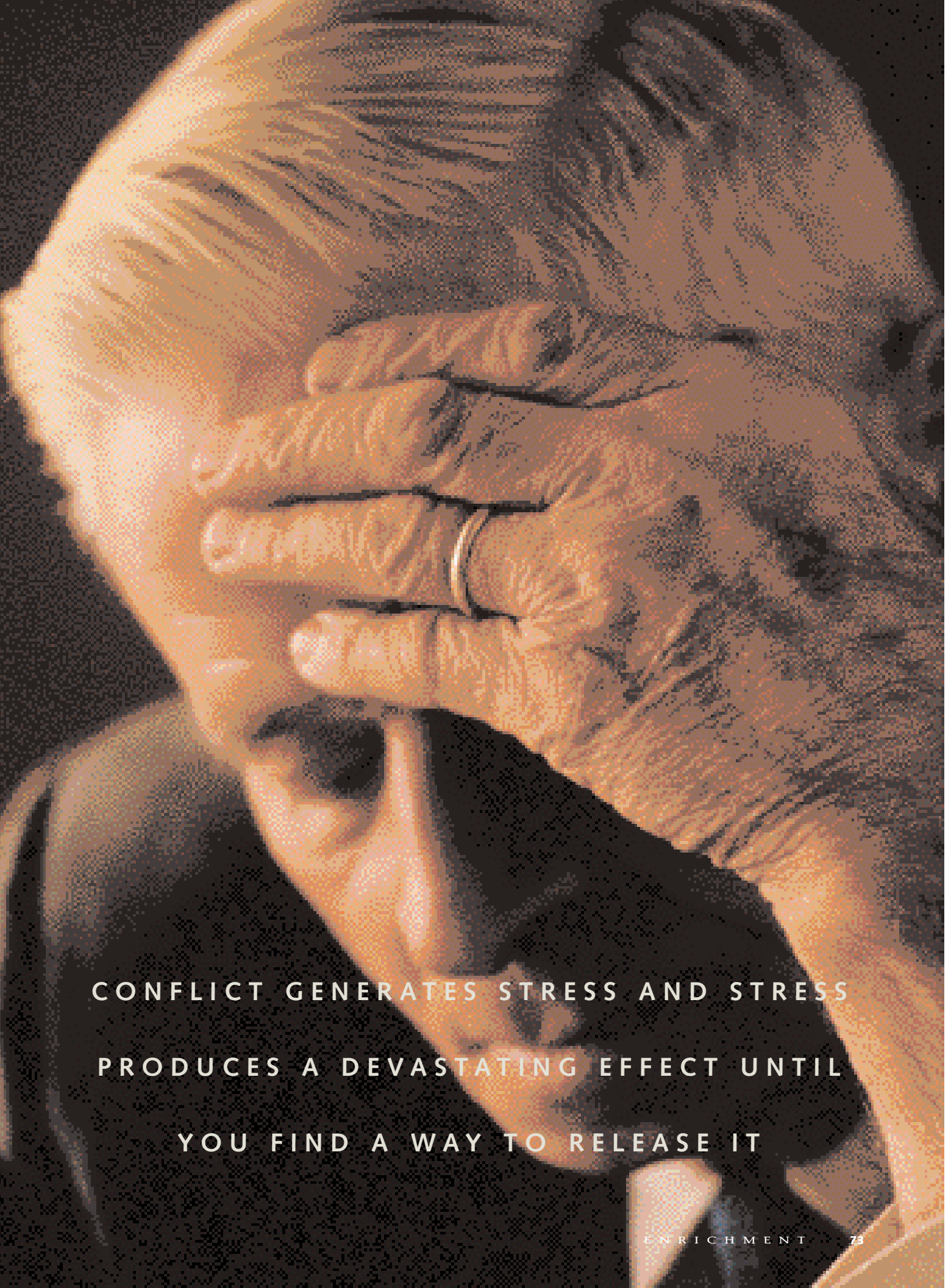
## MANAGING CONFLICT

Conflict generates stress and stress produces a devastating effect until you find a way to release it. Some pastors take advantage of the Sunday morning message to do that. Wired for sound, with mike in hand, they move about the platform jerking the cord as they lecture the thieves that robbed them.

There is a better way to ease your pain and generate good health for the family of God. Malachi 2:16 counsels you to examine your own spirit so you will not deal treacherously. The pastor's state of mind can be powerful in its effects. In a conflict situation, it can be destructive or productive.

As a pastor, your theology about conflict also determines how you will deal with it. Understanding that interpersonal conflict is not always bad may facilitate a good night's rest and will permit you to manage conflict more creatively. If you view all conflict as sin, you will have a difficult time helping people through conflict situations. The example in Acts 15 demonstrates that conflict can help clarify issues and reveal God's will. The Jerusalem Council clarified a doctrinal matter and opened the way for a whole segment of the population to become a part of the body of Christ.

B Y J A M E S D . W I L K I N S



CONFLICT GENERATES STRESS AND STRESS  
PRODUCES A DEVASTATING EFFECT UNTIL  
YOU FIND A WAY TO RELEASE IT



A good pastor will not look for conflict, but neither will he\* run from it or allow it to terrorize and rob him of his integrity and emotional well-being. There are two sound motivations for giving specific attention to managing conflict in the smaller congregation: the well-being of Christ's church, and your emotional health as pastor.

Creative conflict management in a smaller church can often be a significant challenge. Smaller churches are frequently composed of several small family units or a large family unit that has been a part of the congregation for many years. These families sometimes assume that their wishes should be considered more important than the wishes of others who have not been in the church as long or do not have as many family members attending. When this happens, conflict becomes a frequent possibility. When conflict does develop, they often fail to realize they were the cause of it. In their minds, they are the pillars of the church who know what is best. They may even call the church a family and tell you they are happy to have you as their pastor and a member of the family. This is especially true if you are new.

Pastors of smaller congregations need to be aware that managing conflict is a

part of pastoring, and the best way to handle conflict is by seeking solutions in its earliest stage. A sense of tension is frequently a sign that conflict is brewing. This is the time you should begin dealing with the matter. Unfortunately, the problem often progresses through various stages until a forced confrontation takes place. In the New Testament church, the leaders brought disagreeing parties together. They worked at solving the problem until they reached a solution. You need to do the same.

### CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

As pastor, you need to select the best conflict management style for a specific situation. One of the worst mistakes you can make is to choose the wrong style for the circumstance. Pastors often have a preferred style for dealing with conflict as well as a backup style. You can learn to consciously choose the best one for meeting the present need. Compare your managing techniques with these descriptions.

#### Evading

The person with this style prefers to believe there is no conflict. If he has to admit a problem exists, the attitude is generally, *I don't want to get involved*. He hopes the conflict will go away without his

intervention. He is more interested in protecting himself than finding a solution.

People who use this style force someone else to take responsibility for solving the conflict. On some occasions, it is permissible to use the evading style. For example, there may be times when an issue is so trivial it is not worthy of attention. However, if you regularly use this style, people will soon look at you as one who is not fit to lead. The opposing party will seize this opportunity to build a power base. Frustration and hostility will continue to mount until you can no longer ignore the problem.

#### Harmonizing

The one who seeks to harmonize is often an appeaser. His motto is: Relationships are more important than issues. He spends his time trying to get this point across without tackling the issue that divides people. There are times when this style may be effectively utilized, but not all the time. The pastor who constantly uses this method will finally wear out because the problem causing division never is solved. The other people involved in prolonged conflict become more demanding and aggressive. The pastor feels more and more stress because it is terribly burdensome to always smile when you feel like crying. After a few years or months of doing this, the pastor may resign and go elsewhere, only to repeat the cycle.

#### Negotiating

The pastor who uses this technique tries to persuade everyone to give up something in order for each side to gain something of what they want. Exerting pressure while seeking a compromise may help bring about a solution. The results of this kind of effort are often positive. The person with this style is persuasive, but sometimes in a subtle way. The drawback of this method is that the best solution might be sacrificed to obtain a less than perfect solution. This technique may not be the ideal, but it is better than the alternative of no solution at all. A good time to use this style is when the aggression of the



**"The board declined your raise,  
but they said they would upgrade your RAM."**

© 2001 Steve Phelps

warring parties might tear the church apart before there is opportunity to work out a perfect and mutually satisfying solution. The danger is that the people in conflict may not wholeheartedly buy into the decision. People must feel they own the solution, or they will be halfhearted in their commitment to it.

A combination of the harmonizing and negotiating styles worked well for the pastor of one smaller, family-oriented church. The congregation was comprised of two brothers and their large families, and a third segment of time-honored, nonfamily members. Trouble frequently brewed in the congregation, even between the major families. The tenure of pastors was short. One of the family members had become a preacher, and the congregation decided the solution to their problem would be to let him pastor his home church. That worked until he and his uncle began to see things from different perspectives. The oft-repeated solution was to again get a new minister. Eventually a mellow but mature pastor came and stayed for many years. He constantly demonstrated the fruit of the Spirit and began to teach the combating members to give up some of their rights for the sake of harmony. Peace began to reign. The congregation grew and prospered.

### Intimidating

This style creates an atmosphere where others feel so beat down they fail to share important and factual information. However, this information is the very thing that might provide answers to the problem. The pastor who uses the intimidating method often has a personal agenda and predetermines which side he wants to see win. One pastor said that in the early years of his ministry he entered every conflict to win. Even when he was retreating or surrendering, it was for ultimately winning. Anytime a pastor looks on conflict as a situation where there always has to be a winner and a loser, he will eventually be one of the losers. Unintentionally, he will have taught his foes and the skirmishing persons in the congregation that the way to win is to accumulate power, and

they will seek to do that.

There are some times when making a tough, individual decision is the only right method, but it must be done sparingly. Frequent display of an autocratic spirit to solve conflicts will result in a dwindling congregation. The day will come when all that remains is a handful of people. The pastor will declare that he finally cleaned up the church. He may even say this is his calling, and he will move on to clean up another church. Some of those left stranded will smolder with resentment because they feel no one cared about their opinions.

### Networking

Perhaps the most effective way to deal with conflict on a regular basis is through networking. Using this method, the pastor/facilitator will seek to involve the opposing family groups or individuals in defining the problem, suggesting solutions, and agreeing on steps to implement the solution. He may first shuttle back and forth between the groups or individuals before bringing them together to put a solution in place. People tend to support what they help birth. That's the family thing to do. The objective is to help people confront the issues instead of each other in the effort to solve the conflict. This is time consuming, but well worth the effort.

Two fundamental objectives of the networking style are to achieve the goals of the people involved and to mend or maintain the well-being of the fellowship. Failure to achieve these goals in the smaller church will result in an even smaller church. In some situations, pastors take the easy way out and have the church board make all the tough decisions. However, this defeats the two objectives just mentioned. The networking system will be forfeited in the interest of making a decision, and suddenly one side becomes a winner and the other a loser.

Networking requires a unique combination of skills that involves patience, assertiveness, and flexibility. All must sense that the pastor believes their goals

are important, but he must insist on facts and distinguish between facts and opinion. He creates an atmosphere that proclaims, "If we work together, we will find mutually acceptable approaches to the conflict issue." Everyone will have some chance of being a winner because the opposing parties are agreeing on the solution; and, whatever they lose, they are giving up by choice. The networking style is the best for most situations, but a pastor must have time on his side to use it. When time is running out, the solution may lie in seeking concessions or compromises.

### CONCLUSION

As previously stated, most pastors have a preferred conflict-management style and a backup style. To determine your backup style, observe what style you revert to as soon as you are under pressure. When progress is slow, the temptation is there to forsake the selected method in favor of the backup. The wise pastor will consciously select the style that is right for the situation and go to another only when no progress is being made.

The powerful aspect of prayer must also be constantly interlaced with all conflict management procedures. Prayer is more powerful than all the management skills put together. Not only will prayer empower and help the leader go forth with a positive attitude about managing church conflict, but it will enable the facilitator to determine what the end result should be.

Wise pastors recognize that Christians need not destroy the church and each other. They find ways to manage conflict. They use the power of prayer along with God-given skills to accomplish it. **e**

*James D. Wilkins is former superintendent of the Nebraska District and former credentials secretary for the Northern California/ Nevada District. He is founder of*

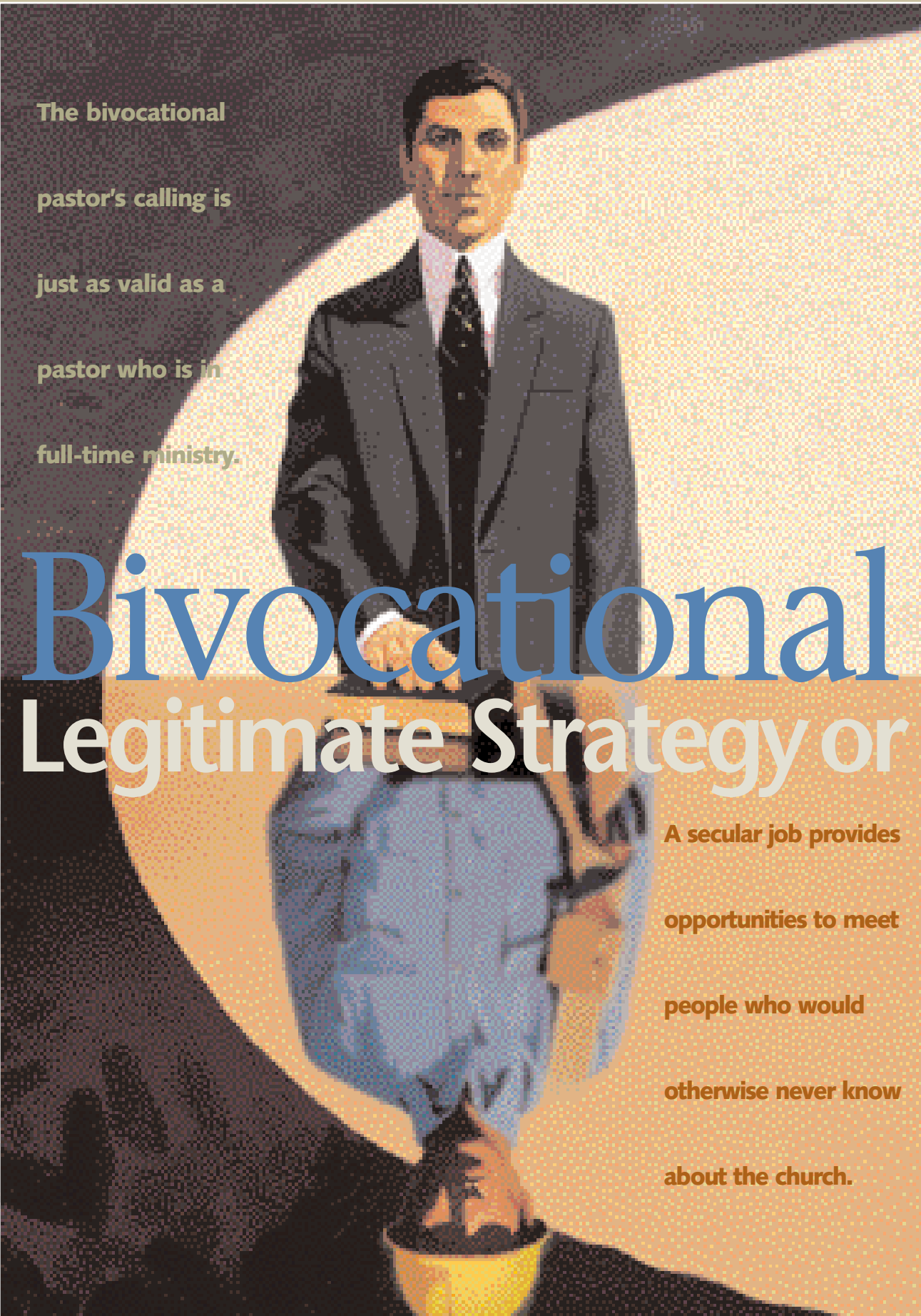


*Assist Ministries, Inc., a ministry dedicated to helping the small-church pastor.*

*\*This applies equally to women pastors.*







The bivocational  
pastor's calling is  
just as valid as a  
pastor who is in  
full-time ministry.

# Bivocational Legitimate Strategy or

A secular job provides  
opportunities to meet  
people who would  
otherwise never know  
about the church.



**A**s a substitute teacher in a northern New Jersey high school, I once had a young, nonreligious Jewish student ask me, “What do Christians believe?” She was curious when she found out I was a pastor. She later baby-sat for us on several occasions, and we talked more about her questions.

While I taught, our assistant pastor worked as a doorman at a luxury, high-rise condominium. He invited a family who lived there to visit our small church, which was then meeting in the local senior citizens recreation center. The couple, both former models, had the external trappings of success, but their home life was falling apart. Over a 2-year period, they divorced, remarried, and through the process became Christians. These opportunities came because we were using a bivocational ministry strategy—supporting ourselves so we could

According to the Assemblies of God Statistician’s office, a 2000 survey of pastors revealed that 23 percent of Assembly of God senior pastors were bivocational. Focus on the Family estimates that 30 to 40 percent of pastors are bivocational.<sup>1</sup> The church-planting pastorate we accepted was a little over 2 years old, located just outside of New York City in a 7-square-mile area with only 5 English-speaking evangelical churches for 80,000 people. The initial 2-year period of financial support had ended, and the church could make no financial guarantees. Later, an associate pastor joined us under the same conditions; we would both be bivocational.

#### **A BIBLICAL MODEL FOR BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY**

It may be helpful for bivocational pastors to understand the biblical model

his relationship to the Corinthians in terms of a parent who is fully willing to “spend for you everything I have and expend myself as well” (2 Corinthians 12:15, NIV). This sacrificial attitude is at the heart of a bivocational minister. With limited or no income from the ministry position, a bivocational pastor labors out of sacrificial love.

In Ephesus, Paul lived out the words of Jesus—“It is more blessed to give than to receive”—through bivocational ministry. Paul supplied his own needs so he could minister to the weak among them (Acts 20:32–35).

Overall, Paul must have considered his own tentmaking part of God’s provision (Philippians 4:11–13). For Paul, serving in a faith ministry was not at odds with a bivocational ministry strategy. Although Paul understood the general principle—a minister should earn a living from the gospel—he voluntarily declined support in some situations.

#### **ADVANTAGES OF BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY**

Bivocational pastors sometimes become discouraged because they cannot devote more time to their church ministry. It sometimes helps to look at the positive aspects of bivocational ministry.

**Financial provision in a small church.** Bivocational ministry allows for pastors to provide for their families in situations where the church’s finances are limited. The pastor is able to make an adequate living, and the church continues to proclaim the gospel in the community. The bivocational pastor’s calling is just as valid as a pastor who is in full-time ministry.

**A welcome diversion between the secular job and church ministry.** In some cases, pastors may prefer bivocational ministry. They may have a particular job skill they enjoy even when there is no other constraint to work outside the ministry. The time spent on a secular job helps the pastor maintain a healthy perspective in each area of life.

# Ministry: Necessary Evil?

**B Y C H R I S T I A N E Y**

minister in a church that could not afford to pay its pastors a full-time salary.

#### **BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY**

Bivocational pastors have at least two jobs, usually working 30 to 40 hours per week in a secular job and 25 to 30 hours per week in the church. With this schedule, bivocational pastors struggle to find the delicate balance between personal, family, and church needs, and the secular job demands. They may find it difficult to attend pastors fellowship meetings and district events, often leaving them isolated. Some bivocational pastors perceive themselves as inferior because they are not in full-time ministry. Yet, as a bivocational pastor, you provide valuable ministry to smaller churches that cannot afford a pastor.

for bivocational ministry. At the time I began my bivocational ministry, I was unaware that I was following a bivocational-ministry strategy similar to what the apostle Paul used for a year-and-a-half in Corinth (1 Corinthians 9:7–15), for 3 years in Ephesus (Acts 20:32–35), and for a time in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 2:9). His trade was tentmaking, a term that has come to mean bivocational to modern ministers.

At Corinth, Paul taught the believers that a preacher has a right to earn a living from the gospel. However, he refused to exercise that right in Corinth for the sake of the gospel (Acts 18:1–11). This allowed Paul to offer the gospel free of charge (1 Corinthians 9:18) and not be a financial burden to the church (2 Corinthians 11:9). Paul also described

**Opportunities for evangelism and personal ministry.** Often pastors of larger churches have limited contact with non-Christians. A secular job provides opportunity to meet people who would otherwise never know about the church. With a secular job, bivocational pastors can also model lifestyle evangelism for their congregations.

**A lay perspective.** Bivocational pastors can view community life from a lay perspective. This can lend itself to relevance in preaching. A secular job shows the minister a community's true conditions and most pressing needs. By adapting illustrations from a secular job environ-

Conversely, some ministers get rewarding secular jobs that provide good compensation and benefits. The latter situation can greatly test a minister's commitment to the pastoral calling. Having pastored with both types of jobs, I recommend finding a vocation that provides the necessary flexibility to carry out one's ministerial calling and be available for emergencies in the church.

**High demands on the spouse and family.** Because bivocational pastors are often unavailable, their spouses may end up with too much church responsibility. As a homemaker with the church office in our home, my wife received most of

## Although Paul understood the general principle—he a minister should earn a living from the gospel—he voluntarily declined support in some situations.

ment into sermons, bivocational pastors can teach their congregations how to apply faith through real-life situations.

### DISADVANTAGES OF BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY

**Time constraints.** Bivocational ministry limits the amount of time pastors can spend on sermon preparation, church administration, visitation, family responsibilities, rest, and recreation. Because of time constraints, bivocational pastors usually have just enough time to do the minimum amount of work to survive, and as a result, their churches may suffer.

Bivocational pastors will also need to prioritize their time so they will not use it unwisely. Even though a church may be small, bivocational pastors can delegate some responsibilities to church members. Training lay leaders is worth the effort. Building a ministry team, even if it is only with one or two others, helps lighten the pastor's load and teaches members that each person has a part in building the body of Christ.

**Secular employment concerns.** Often the minister has limited job skills, making the additional job unrewarding.

the church calls and attempted to respond to crisis situations when I was unavailable. Administrative tasks often fell her way as well. Initially, she enjoyed participating in the ministry this way, but over time she began to resent the way people looked to her as the primary contact for the church. She eventually directed parishioners to me, even when I was not immediately available.

Even with time restraints, bivocational pastors need to schedule time with their spouse and family. While the pressing needs of the ministry may cry out for attention, time spent with one's family is a priority in a bivocational minister's life.

**Second-class clergy perception.** Because bivocational ministers often cannot attend district and sectional events, they may feel like second-class citizens of the clergy community. With only 2 weeks vacation from the secular job, pastors sometimes cannot afford to take vacation days for denominational events—they need time with their families. Nevertheless, bivocational ministers must find time for much-needed fellowship and create an awareness of their presence and ministries.

By reaching out to the ministers in your area or district, they will become aware of your needs. Perhaps some pastors have been where you are now. Their wise counsel can help you during this time in your ministry. Talk with your superintendent about ways you can be involved in district functions. Once you have made this effort, you may be surprised at how God opens the door for fellowship with other pastors.

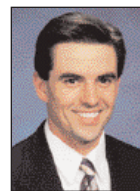
### LEGITIMATE STRATEGIES FOR BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY

Although Paul does validate bivocational ministry, he used the model for church-planting efforts. We may do well to consider a similar model for contemporary church-planting efforts.

In addition to church planting, other situations are appropriate for bivocational ministry. For example, bivocational ministry may be a well-suited choice for declining churches, churches in economically depressed areas, or as a staff member with a growing, turnaround church. Some pastors who may prefer bivocational ministry are prime candidates for these situations. Bivocational ministry should not be viewed as subordinate to "full-time" ministry when there are many situations where a bivocational pastor is an appropriate way to fulfill a ministry.

A pastor who is fully supported by the local church remains the New Testament norm and ideal. However, bivocational ministry can advance the work of the Kingdom in appropriate situations. In those cases, it should not be viewed as a necessary evil, but rather as a legitimate ministry strategy. **e**

*Chris Rainey served as a bivocational church planter for 7 years and is currently a bivocational assistant pastor at Englewood Assembly of God in Englewood, New Jersey.*



### E N D N O T E S

1. Focus on the Family, *The Parsonage*, [www.family.org/pastor/faq/10011295.html](http://www.family.org/pastor/faq/10011295.html), November 17, 2000.



# Ministry Resources for Smaller Churches

## ORGANIZATIONS DEDICATED TO SMALLER CHURCHES

### Church and Social Science

#### Information Exchange

7941 O'Bannon Rd.  
Nashport, OH 43830  
Web site: [www.seorf.ohiou.edu/~xx042/](http://www.seorf.ohiou.edu/~xx042/)

#### Center for Rural Church Leadership

Web site: [www.seorf.ohiou.edu/~xx042/r\\_ctr/r\\_ctr.html](http://www.seorf.ohiou.edu/~xx042/r_ctr/r_ctr.html)

#### The Smaller Church Network

Ashland Theological Seminary  
910 Center St.  
Ashland, OH 44805  
Web site: [www.ashland.edu/~rwaters/smallchurches.htm](http://www.ashland.edu/~rwaters/smallchurches.htm)

#### Western Institute for Small Church Health

A ministry of Western Seminary  
5511 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd.  
Portland, OR 98215  
Phone: 800-547-4546  
Web site: [www.westernseminary.edu/isch/ichsmall.html](http://www.westernseminary.edu/isch/ichsmall.html)

#### The Alban Institute

Suite 433 North  
4550 Montgomery Ave.  
Bethesda, MD 20814-3341  
Phone: 800-486-1318, ext. 244.  
Web site: [www.alban.org](http://www.alban.org)

#### Church Growth Institute

P.O. Box 7000  
Forest, VA 24551  
Phone: 800-553-GROW  
Web site: [www.churchgrowth.org](http://www.churchgrowth.org)

#### The McIntosh Church Growth Network

Dr. Gary L. McIntosh  
P.O. Box 892589  
Temecula, CA 92589-2589

Phone or fax: 909-506-3086  
Web site: [www.mcintoshcgn.com](http://www.mcintoshcgn.com)

#### Net Results Resource Center

5001 Avenue N.  
Lubbock, TX 79412-2993  
Phone: 806-762-8094  
Web site: [www.netresults.org](http://www.netresults.org)

#### New Life Ministries

1996 Donegal Springs Rd.  
Mt. Joy, PA 17552  
Phone: 800-774-3360  
Web site: [www.NewLifeMinistries-NLM.org](http://www.NewLifeMinistries-NLM.org)

#### Pastors.com

A ministry of Saddleback Church  
Web site: [www.pastors.com](http://www.pastors.com)

#### Sonlife Ministries

Dann Spader, director  
526 North Main Street  
Elburn, IL 60119  
Phone: 800-770-4769,  
or 630-365-5855  
Web site: [www.sonlife.com/sighe.html](http://www.sonlife.com/sighe.html)  
[sighe.html](http://sighe.html)

## RESOURCES

*Broken Forks, Macaroni, and The Church* (video) An excellent video to help rural, older adults understand why old tools do not work anymore.

Don Lechner  
4840 April Drive  
Grovetown, GA 30813  
E-mail: Don Lechner at:  
[Don5boyz@aol.com](mailto:Don5boyz@aol.com).

*The Church Growth Survey Handbook* (Helpful resource for charting growth)  
Public Ministries  
OC International  
P.O. Box 36900

Colorado Springs, CO 80936-6900  
Web site: [www.oci@oci.org](mailto:www.oci@oci.org).

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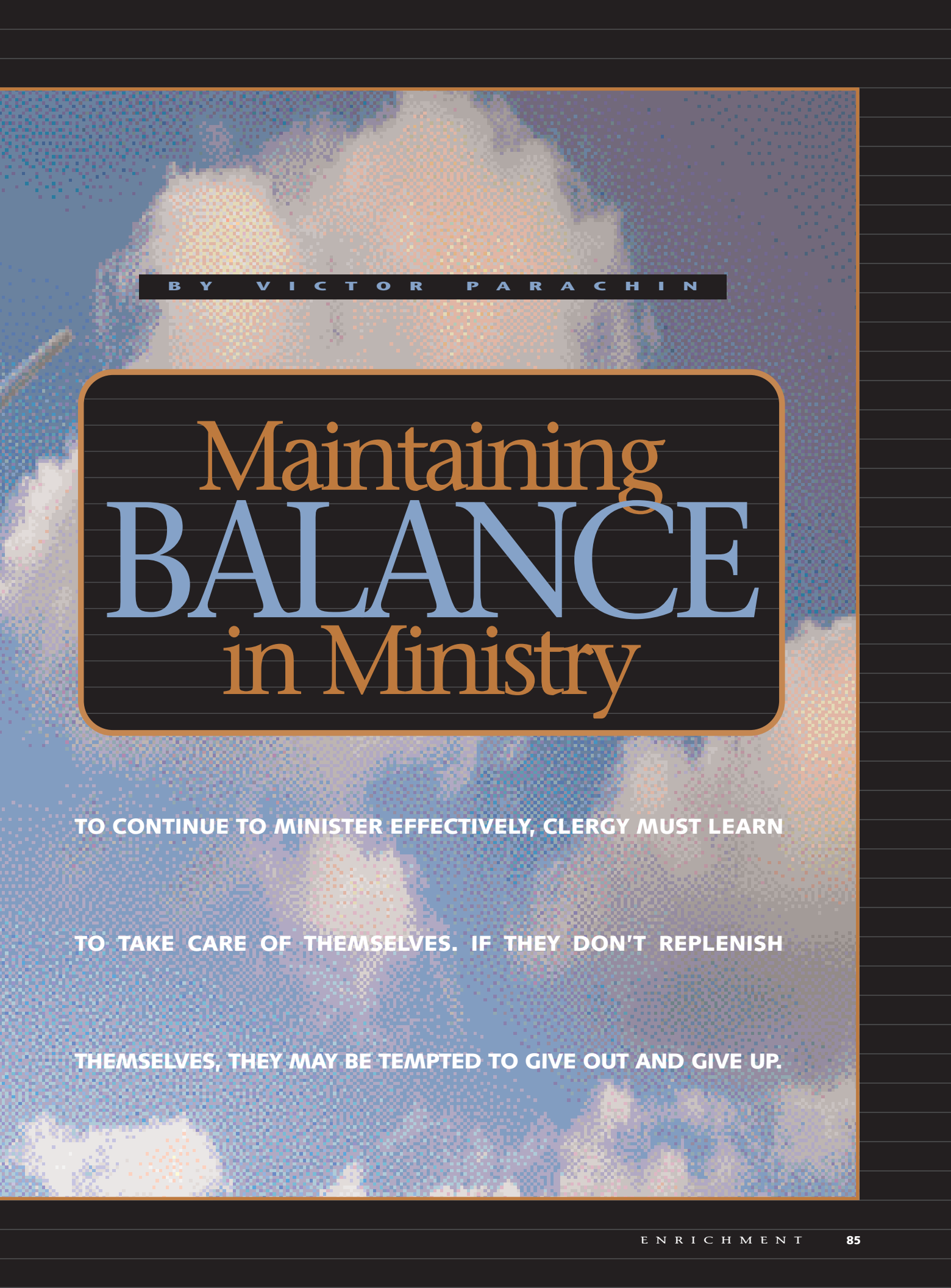
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BY VICTOR PARACHIN

# Maintaining BALANCE in Ministry

TO CONTINUE TO MINISTER EFFECTIVELY, CLERGY MUST LEARN

TO TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES. IF THEY DON'T REPLENISH

THEMSELVES, THEY MAY BE TEMPTED TO GIVE OUT AND GIVE UP.

# A healthy mind and a healthy spirit living in a healthy body should be every minister's objective.

The story is told that church board minutes contained this entry: "Deacon Hunt moved and Deacon Hicks seconded that we hire Reverend Johnson as our next pastor. He is musically trained and has a history of youth work. What this church needs is a better music program and someone who works well with youth."

Two years later this entry appeared in the minutes: "Deacon Hicks moved and Deacon Hunt seconded that we fire Reverend Johnson. All we do in worship is sing and listen to the choir. Pastor Johnson spends too much time with the youth and has neglected his calling to the elderly."

This story illustrates the pressures that many of today's clergy experience. Church members declare their admiration, yet sometimes deliver admonition. Ministers receive praise, but also criticism. A Sunday sermon can elicit two anonymous letters in the same week—one correcting the minister's grammar; the other containing money for a family need. As a result of such divergent perceptions and responses to ministry,

pastors can experience stress, strain, a feeling of isolation and frustration, as well as lose their sense of perception.

To continue to minister effectively, clergy must learn to take care of themselves. A healthy mind and a healthy spirit living in a healthy body should be every minister's objective. Here are some steps toward achieving that goal and maintaining balance in ministry.

## ROUTINELY REPLENISH YOUR RESERVES

"No minister can give, give, and give without receiving," writes Robert D. Dale, author of *Pastoral Leadership*. "If we don't replenish ourselves, we may be tempted to give out and give up. Ministers need the support of encouraging relationships and accessible resources for replenishment."

To avoid ministry burnout, tap into these seven resources and relationships that can replenish ministry reserves:

1. Personal devotional disciplines.
2. Encouragement from spouses and family members.
3. Consultation and counseling with denominational leaders.

4. Denominational resources such as written and audiovisual materials.

5. Local congregational resources. Budget educational expenses and vacation periods.

6. Peer support.

7. Nurture and guidance from helping professionals such as educators, doctors, nurses, social workers, therapists, and counselors.

## EXERCISE REGULARLY

In his book, *The Effective Pastor: A Guide to Successful Ministry*, Louis W. Bloede, professor of parish ministries and director of ministerial studies emeritus at Iliff School of Theology, Denver, Colorado, writes about a new United Methodist bishop assigned to his area. "The geographical area served by this bishop includes Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, and Montana," Dr. Bloede notes. Knowing the new bishop would be extremely busy, Dr. Bloede wondered how the bishop would survive the demanding schedule. Shortly after the bishop was installed, Dr. Bloede described this encounter: "I stopped by the YMCA where I try to swim several times a week. Whom should I meet in the lobby but our bishop, along with a Denver pastor. Both were attired in appropriate garb, and with equipment in hand, were ready to play a game of racquetball." Because the bishop knew the importance of exercise, Dr. Bloede says, "I was reassured. Our bishop will not only survive but excel."

Studies show conclusively that many stresses of daily life can be dissolved through regular exercise. Both job performance and satisfaction are heightened when the body is strong and capable. The clergy who are not in the habit of routinely exercising should consider walking, jogging, or biking. Paul wrote: "Do you not know that your body is a



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# Studies show conclusively that many stresses of daily life can be dissolved through regular exercise.

temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.... Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19,20, NIV).

## INSPIRE YOURSELF

Pray daily. "Prayer is the most important thing in my life. If I should neglect prayer for a single day, I should lose a great deal of the fire of faith," declared Martin Luther. Do not assume that sermon and worship preparation is simultaneously developing and deepening your faith. While that may happen, a pastor's interior life is fully developed only when serious attention is given to personal prayer, meditation, and reflection.

While spending time in prayer, be guided by this wisdom from the 17th century Francois Fenelon: "Talk to Him in prayer of all your wants, your troubles, even on the weariness you feel in serving Him. You cannot speak too freely, too trustfully to Him."

One who discovered the power of personal prayer to revitalize ministry was John Sutherland Bonnell, pastor of New York's Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. Bonnell describes how ministry at his large, New York City church involved traveling by subway and bus. He disliked the crowded transportation system. The screaming wheels on the rails when the subway train rounded a curve and the general noise and confusion grated on his soul like sandpaper. One day he noticed that his hand, holding the strap in the center of a swaying subway car, was lifted up in an attitude of prayer. The thought came to him that many in the crowd on the subway found life pressing hard on them. *How can I better employ my time than in praying for them and myself?* he thought. Bonnell says from that moment all anxiety and frustration of riding the subway

disappeared. Specifically, he prayed that he might receive the gift of God's peace and carry it to the sick people he would soon be visiting. Bonnell says he sometimes came up out of the subway with such a deep peace and inner stillness that one might normally only associate with prayer in a quiet sanctuary.

## BECOME AN EXPERT IN ONE AREA

Focus on one area where you can excel. Your self-esteem is enhanced and your self-confidence deepened when you become highly competent in one field. Establish expertise in such activities as:

- freelance writing and editing.
- coaching community youth.
- delivering motivational speeches.
- enhancing community resources by facilitating support groups for the terminally ill, the addicted, and the bereaved.
- providing leadership in local clergy associations.
- becoming your area denominational resource on Christian education, worship, music, computers, and social justice.
- conducting periodic evangelistic meetings.

## TEND TO YOUR FAMILY

Have your priorities established clearly: God, family, ministry. Date your spouse periodically. Set aside a night exclusively for family. Attend your children's school meetings, concerts, plays, athletic events, as often as possible.

"The work of the minister is important, but not more important than the minister's family," writes Dr. Bloede. "The minister needs to be with the family at important times in their lives. It is legitimate to schedule time with your spouse or family. Write it in your personal appointment book and tell the committee chairperson who wants to schedule a special meeting, 'Sorry, I've

got a prior commitment I cannot break.' You might even suggest that the committee meet without you. It took me several years in the parish ministry before I accepted that fact and convinced the congregation that I did not need to be present at every meeting. That means the pastor gives up some authority and shares some power. But think of it as a vote of confidence in the laity. It is their church, as well as your church."

## CULTIVATE THE FINE ART OF SAYING NO

"There is no way you can do everything you will be asked to do as a pastor, Christian educator, church business administrator, church musician, or youth worker. Learn to say no—and say it," writes Steve Clapp in his book, *Positioning Ministry for Success*. Remind yourself you do not have to perform every wedding and funeral, nor do you have to accept every speaking invitation extended to you.

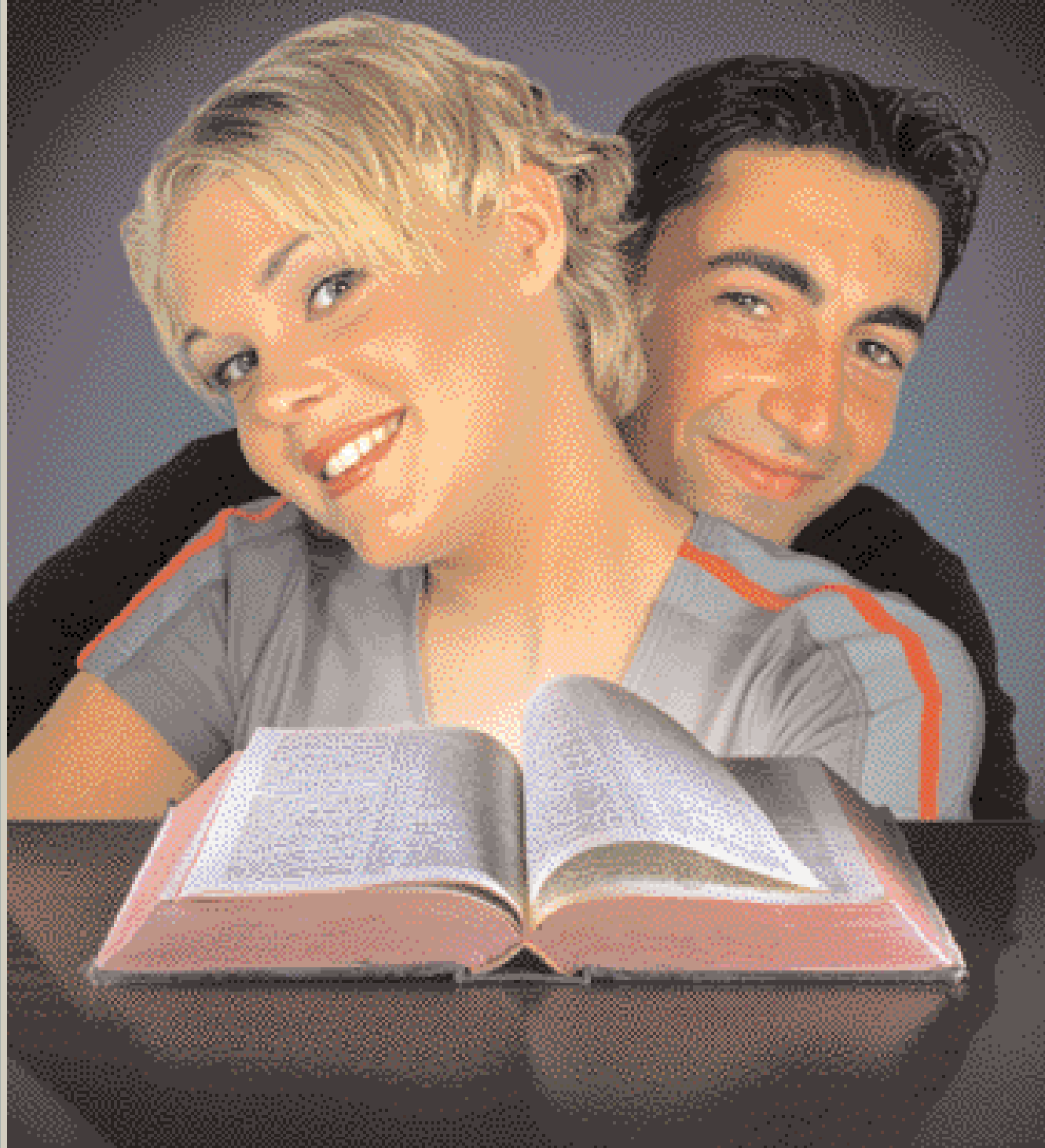
## TAKE TIME TO APPRECIATE THE JOURNEY

Robert Cueni, author of *What Ministers Can't Learn in Seminary*, observes that much of life's satisfactions come from pursuing rather than attaining goals. "Pastors frequently find themselves serving churches in communities far from the nation's cultural centers. Even the most isolated community, however, offers certain lessons and experiences. Do not wish away your life and ministry, but enjoy these as part of your journey. Experiences teach us that the next place will not differ greatly from the present one," Cueni writes. **e**

Victor M. Parachin, M.Div., is a minister who lives in Claremont, California.



THE CURRENT GENERATION IS GROWING UP  
UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES THAN  
ANY GENERATION BEFORE.





# Biblical Preaching

## FOR A NEW GENERATION

B Y M I C H A E L V A N D O R E N

The best way to reach today's generation is the same way to reach any generation or any culture—through the truth of God's unchanging Word. This statement concerns what we preach; how we preach the Word is another matter. Not all preachers share the same perception about biblical preaching, and not all know how to deliver unchanging truth to a changing world.

### **BALANCE IS OFTEN REALITY**

Generations share things in common with preceding generations, but they also have their own distinctives. We cannot deny the validity of the past or the need to adjust to the present and future. In some churches, there is little difference between what they were in 1981 and what they are in 2001. These same churches wonder why they are not reaching their communities for Christ. Successful churches have the wisdom to take what is valued from the past and repackage it for the needs of the present.

### **WHO IS LISTENING?**

There are many ways to make preaching listener oriented. One of those ways is understanding your audience. Consider

the following two characteristics of the new generation and how they relate to preaching.

This generation is desperately lost. Every generation has been sinful and in need of the gospel, but the apostle Paul says that in the last days there will be terrible times. He describes this godlessness in 2 Timothy 3. We are living in the last days. The current generation is growing up under different circumstances than any generation before. Christian faith is being extracted from the public schools. A high divorce rate has left many children emotionally scarred and distrustful. Suicide rates, drug abuse, crime rates, immorality, and disrespect for authority continue to increase, tearing apart the moral fabric of our country. People lack self-control, a desire to be responsible, and the work ethic of the builder and boomer generations. Most do not understand what commitment to God, church, a spouse, or a job means. Many of this generation have grown up outside the church and without good examples.

Though many positive characteristics of the new generation exist, we still live in a generation that is in desperate need of hearing the Bible proclaimed with a

loving, holy boldness. Some preachers are not really proclaiming the Scriptures. Rather, they are proclaiming subjects with complex outlines or are allegorizing the text because they do not take time to study it properly. We need to keep the exposition and application of God's Word in the pulpits if we hope to reach this hurting generation for Christ.

A second characteristic of the current generation that affects preaching is its way of listening. Members of this generation are capable of handling large amounts of information and processing it from multiple sources. They surf the Internet with ever-increasing demand for data.

A recent survey by PC magazine indicated that 94 percent of its readers use the Web to gather information about a product or service.<sup>1</sup> People today can surf 100 TV channels beamed by satellites. They also read magazines and books, and listen to tapes. Many carry pagers, cell phones, laptop computers, and Palm Pilots. They want information now and become bored with one-main-idea sermons and unexciting preachers.

Watch and analyze newscasts and popular TV shows and you will discover there are multiple scenarios switching

back and forth in one program. Today's listeners are fed a steady diet of changing information; it has reached the point of cultural conditioning. A side effect of TV viewing and Internet usage is shorter attention spans. This does not mean that our entire sermon should be limited to the space between advertisements, but there are mental limits. After these limits, people will tune you out. Pastors would do well to have main points that last between 5 and 9 minutes, depending on the length of the sermon.

The following comments are balanced attempts to revitalize your preaching. Some of them are things you already do; others will require changes.

### WHAT WE PREACH: A CASE FOR NARRATIVE, BIBLICAL SERMONS

One of my preaching professors once said that it is as hard to find preachers

who are opposed to biblical preaching as it is to find preachers who actually do it. Roger VanHarn observes that "sermons are preached from biblical texts, not on biblical texts."<sup>2</sup> Sometimes I hear a preacher apologetically state, "Today's sermon is not very homiletical." As a homiletics professor, I perk up and sit closer to the edge of my seat in anticipation of a sermon that might actually preach the biblical text. My hope is usually rewarded as the minister unfolds the verses, explaining and applying them to today.

"Homiletical" depends on the homiletics one was taught, and homiletics has changed over the past 20 years. The starting point is not, What can I say about this passage? but rather, What is this passage trying to say?

Most contemporary homileticians are saying that we need to get back to narrative preaching and let the form of the text design the sermon structure. Biblical and Early Church examples of preaching were narrative. The Bible itself is narrative, not a set of outlined topics. God knows the best way to communicate. Early Pentecostals preached narrative sermons because they did not have formal seminary training. Author Don Wardlaw and the six other contributors to his book, *Preaching Biblically*, make a strong case for sermon shapes coming from the biblical texts.<sup>3</sup>

We do not always need to go verse by verse, but the main ideas of the passage should be the main ideas of the sermon. David Buttrick teaches pastors to write out the plot structure of a passage, list each main item, and then develop it in various ways. He notes that topical sermons are like blown-up snapshots of a passage, but the passage is more like a motion picture.<sup>4</sup> Our listeners really want the motion picture.

Scripture passages are gardens of truth, not single flowers. They are buffet tables for the church to feast on, not one-course meals. Why reduce the text to one theme when it may have a multitude of truths it is trying to say. If God's Word can express itself in a 30-second paragraph, we should be able to

reiterate it in a 30-minute sermon. When we reduce God's Word to topics, we may restrict the message God wants to communicate through a passage and may not allow the Holy Spirit—the One who inspired each verse—to speak through the text. A by-product of this approach is that our people do not really know or understand the Word of God, and they become spiritually vulnerable. I am not advocating total abolition of topical sermons, but asserting that they should be rare.

Not only does sermon structure define biblical preaching, but what the sermon accomplishes is also important. William Thompson notes, "Biblical preaching occurs when listeners are enabled to see how their world, like the biblical world, is addressed by the Word of God and are enabled to respond to that Word."<sup>5</sup> Our messages should call people to identify with what God is saying in the passage and respond to it.

We are preaching in a desperate, wounded age, an age that needs the loving, healing touch of solid, biblical preaching. There is power in the Word; let's preach the Word. **e**

*Michael VanDoren, D.Min., taught preaching courses in the practical ministries department at Southeastern College of the Assemblies of God in Lakeland, Florida, for 17 years. He is currently involved in evangelistic work.*



### COMPONENTS FOR POWERFUL BIBLICAL SERMONS

1. Preach Bible passages, not just topics from passages.
2. Saturate sermon preparation with prayer as you exegete the text and exegete everyday life.
3. Enable listeners to see how the Word of God addresses their world and enable them to respond to that Word.
4. Have a clear, logical structure with a narrative flow of ideas.
5. Provide interesting information to an information age.
6. Occasionally use multimedia enhancements.
7. Be real, relevant, and relational.
8. People have a mind, a will, and emotions—address all three in the sermon.
9. Do not be afraid to call people to repentance and biblical holiness.
10. Do not compromise the Bible's sound doctrine for popular fads or experiences.
11. Energize people to involvement in evangelism and other ministries.
12. Love your listeners.

—Michael VanDoren, D.Min.,  
Lakeland, Florida.

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# interview

WITH RONALD IWASKO

## Global University— Reaching the World for Christ

**G**lobal University, a unification and expansion of the former Berean and ICI universities, is now the world's largest distance-education undergraduate and graduate program in evangelical Christendom. Currently, the university is training over 450,000 students in 169 countries with materials translated into 135 languages. More than 94,000 persons gave their lives to the Lord through Global University in 2000.

Nearly 400 guests from around the world were on hand to witness the dedication of the Assemblies of God's Global University international headquarters and the official installation of its new president, Ronald Iwasko, D.Miss., March 21, in Springfield, Missouri.

Enrichment's Managing Editor Rick Knoth discussed with Ronald Iwasko the impact of this unification on the global ministry and mission of the church.

### WHAT PRECIPITATED THE JOINT VENTURE BETWEEN ICI AND GLOBAL UNIVERSITY?

Berean was started in 1948 as a distance-education program to prepare pastors for ministry. Some people felt God's call to ministry and wanted to get credentials but could not leave their jobs or ministries to attend Bible college.

Berean was first called Berean School of the Bible. It became Berean College, and later Berean University when graduate-level courses were added. Berean's college-level and graduate-level courses used almost exclusively International Correspondence Institute materials. Berean

became the stateside distance-education center using ICI materials.

ICI was established in 1967 by George M. Flattery. He wanted to standardize correspondence curriculum to help reach people who were coming to the Lord overseas. Missionaries also needed materials to help train pastors quickly. Overseas we continue to use the name ICI because this is how we are registered in most countries. We do not want to go through the registration process again.

The basic focus of Berean and ICI is the same. Global's desire is to help people know the Lord Jesus Christ, to disciple them, and to train them to become leaders in their local churches. ICI also established a master's-level program for those who feel led to become pastors and teachers in Bible schools or leaders in districts and national churches.

Prior to the merger, we had two schools with the same goals, but in different locations. It made sense to combine them for economic reasons and to utilize the best from both programs. Once we were on the Internet, geographical boundaries disappeared.

One other thing precipitated this venture. ICI and Berean came together at a very strategic time in terms of what was taking place in the state of Texas regarding compliance with state regulations for accreditation. When ICI moved to Texas from Brussels, Belgium, ICI's leaders were told ICI complied with state higher-education regulations. Later the state told these leaders that ICI did not comply. Texas



RONALD IWASKO

Higher Education standards do not allow for a stand-alone, distance-education program. Their regulations are based on a residential program with an extension program. They wanted us to have a residential campus, with 65,000 volumes in our library, and other accoutrements for students. ICI began working to meet state requirements and started the accreditation process with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

When the decision was made in February 1998 to move to Springfield, Missouri, and bring the two schools together, ICI was approaching its 2-year review process with SACS. From ICI's standpoint, they had to proceed with the evaluation process. Later at the

## HOW WILL THE MERGER ENHANCE THE MINISTRY OF GLOBAL?

By bringing both staffs together, we have expertise that blends together at the institute level, pre-college level, college level, and graduate level.

In the United States, there is a tremendous growth in ethnic population. ICI's overseas experience can help reach these people. We not only have materials in many languages, but we also understand their cultures and the problems they face. With our new ethnic-ministries outreach, we can provide materials and expertise in working with them.

Being in Springfield gives us immediate access to A/G Foreign Missions and the General Council. Most members of our

our missionaries buy the *Great Questions of Life* or discipleship programs. We want to make sure they have those materials available in many languages.

We want to be in tune with what is happening overseas as we develop courses on the Internet, in print, or on CDs. We want to be the best we can be in instructional design to meet the needs.

We want to be more culturally sensitive to how people process information. For example, in the West we tend to follow a Greek approach to education. We think in terms of deductive thinking: Roman numeral I, sub a, b, c. Most of our materials today have been written based on this Greek approach and are cognitively oriented. Most of the world does not think or learn that way. They learn through narrative; they learn inductively. Tell them a story, give them a proverb, give them an anecdote, and from that they will infer the meaning. Much of the Bible is written in narrative form because that's the way people learn.

**In His foreknowledge,  
God knew that ICI  
would need to move,  
and ICI was preparing  
itself in that process.**



PHOTO BY DERRALD MUSGROVE

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's official meeting in August 1999, ICI leaders were told they didn't measure up to all of the state's standards. Since ICI was moving to Springfield, the state gave us an extension, but ICI had to move by September 2000. God knew that ICI would need to move, and ICI was preparing itself in that process.

## SOME MIGHT WONDER IF THE COMING TOGETHER OF THE TWO ENTITIES WOULD BE A COMPROMISE OF THE INDIVIDUAL PURPOSE OF EACH INSTITUTION.

No, because the basic purpose is the same. Our purpose, first of all, is to prepare people to know Jesus Christ, and second, to disciple them to become like Christ in their lifestyles and to become leaders in their local churches.

board of directors are in Springfield. Foreign missionaries come to Springfield at least once every 5 years for School of Missions, pre-field orientation, and meetings with regional directors. We can help them know what we are doing so they can make better use of the materials available to them. When we are developing programs, we invite field missionaries to our meetings and ask them to help us.

Assemblies of God Foreign Missions has missions presence in 162 countries. ICI materials are in 169 countries. ICI goes beyond where we have missionaries.

## WHAT IS YOUR STRATEGIC LONG-TERM PLAN TO KEEP GLOBAL UNIVERSITY ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF MISSIONS AND MINISTRY?

We work closely with A/G Foreign Missions. With Light for the Lost funding,

## WILL GLOBAL UNIVERSITY CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THE DISTANCE-EDUCATION COURSE OF STUDY FOR MINISTERS DESIRING CREDENTIALS?

Our course of study through Berean for those desiring credentials through their districts or the General Council has not changed. Seventy courses have been developed at the Berean level. We have certificates in specialized areas such as youth and children's ministries, or counseling.

About 50 percent of those who get a Certified Minister's License or credentials have done so by studying with Berean. At the licensure level, about 22 percent; at the ordination level, about 24 percent. Approximately one-third of Assemblies of God ministers have studied with Berean for their credentials.

Individuals interested in studying the courses required for credentials can write, call (1-800-443-1083), or go to our Web page: [www.globaluniversity.edu](http://www.globaluniversity.edu) to enroll. We have virtual classroom capability so students are in real-time audio connection with us through their computers. We have people in several locations who are studying as one cohort in a particular subject.



With their computers, they have audio connection, and we have a facilitator who is talking with them, walking them through the course.

### **IS IT POSSIBLE FOR A LOCAL CHURCH TO LINK INTO ANY OF YOUR ELECTRONIC FEEDS? EXPLAIN.**

Yes. Our technical support staff can explain how that is done. Any pastor interested in linking with us should call Global University for more information.

When churches are contemplating linking to us, they need to consider the time needed for the various classes. Some churches want to link up in Sunday school. In a study center, though, 1 1/2-or 2-hour sessions are needed. Some Sunday schools are only 45 minutes long. This does not allow for the needed discussion. On Wednesdays, parents may have children in programs, and the time needed for class interaction may not work on these nights. There are ways churches can link to us. We are happy to discuss options with church leaders.

### **THE ISSUE OF EQUIVALENCY BETWEEN DISTANCE LEARNING VERSUS TRADITIONAL MINISTERIAL TRAINING DOESN'T GO AWAY. HOW ARE YOU RESPONDING TO THIS ONGOING DEBATE?**

There is no perfect way to train ministers, whether in a classroom setting or by distance education. Here are some considerations:

1. The idea that all Berean students are studying by correspondence is false. We have 1,200 study centers at the Berean undergraduate levels. Those are group settings that provide application, discussions, and hands-on ministry opportunities because they are held in churches.

2. The greatest proportion of Berean students are older. Many have other degrees and a variety of ministry and secular work experiences. They are not novices.

3. We cannot stereotype. Picturing Berean students as low educated with limited financial means, and studying alone in some remote corner of the

country is inaccurate. Many of our students are in secular universities, white-collar workers in industry, church leaders, and Master's Commission students.

One drawback right now is that the curriculum determined for credentials is limited. We need to include courses specifically designed to address interpersonal relations, conflict management, sociology, anthropology, and cross-cultural communications. Courses should also include required interactive, hands-on components. Mentoring and even internships could be included. Another shortcoming of the program is when students do not take advantage of the ministry setting and the potential of peer learning through group process.

Research continues to show that distance-education programs need not be inferior. Our first two master's-level graduates have entered Ph.D. programs. The first one has completed his Ph.D. If distance education is done right, it can be as good (or better) as any classroom situation, because many students are in real-ministry

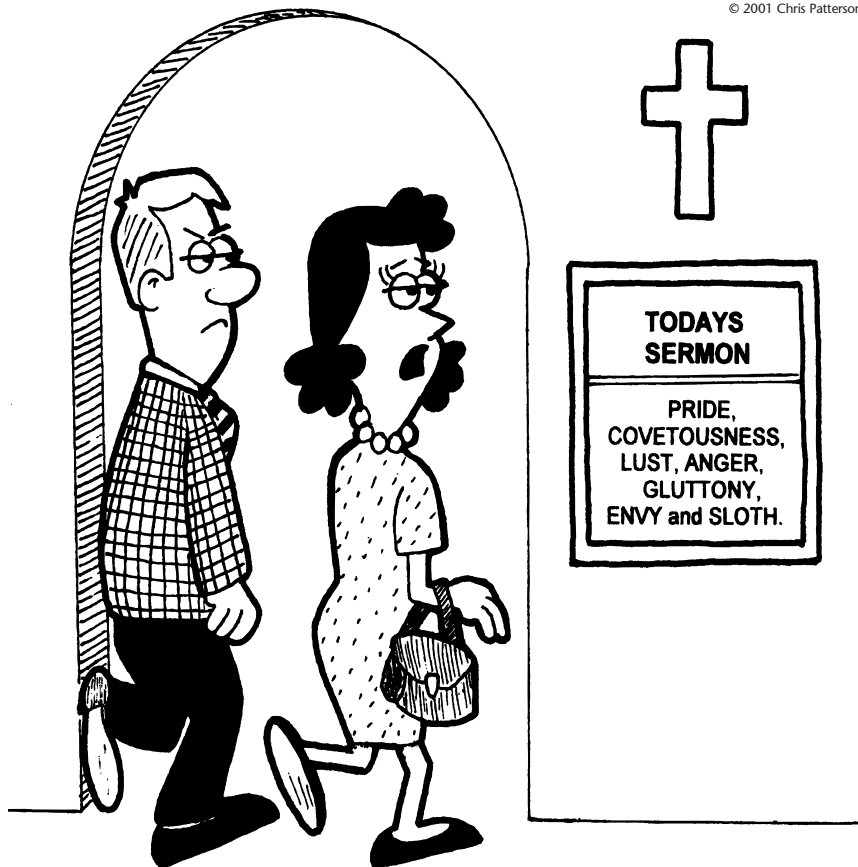
situations. Through learning centers, students can enhance that experience through face-to-face interaction with an instructor and other students.

### **HOW CAN CHURCHES AND OTHERS PARTNER WITH GLOBAL UNIVERSITY TO SUPPORT ITS MINISTRY?**

ICI receives monthly support from churches. However, when the merger took place, we lost 60 to 65 percent of our donor income. This has presented a very real challenge. Perhaps our donors thought we were becoming a stateside ministry and no longer working overseas.

Individuals and churches have given gifts in response to our appeals. One church recently gave \$25,000. We also have a program called Project Timothy where people donate \$25 a month to help us develop and provide materials for our students overseas. We are also in a capital campaign to help cover the cost of remodeling our building here in Springfield and expanding our new outreach. **e**

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**"Boy, the Reverend sure has your number."**



# A Sabbath Day's Journey

B Y S T A N L E Y M . H O R T O N

The Greek *sabbatou hodos* (Acts 1:12) designates the distance from the Mount of Olives to the city of Jerusalem. In New Testament times, Jewish rabbis used this term as the limit in distance a Jew could go from his or her home on the Sabbath. The rabbis set this distance by their tradition as 2,000 cubits or about 1,000 yards (a cubit was slightly less than 18 inches).

First, the rabbis based their tradition on the last part of Exodus 16:29,30, which forbade the Israelites to go out on the Sabbath to gather manna. "Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out. So the people rested on the seventh day."\* Then, since the distance separating the people from the ark as they marched across the Jordan was 1,000 yards (Joshua 3:4), the rabbis

day of sacred assembly...a Sabbath to the Lord." The word *rest* (Hebrew, *m<sup>e</sup>nuchah*) has the basic meaning of "ceasing." God ceased from His work of creating on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2,3). For the Sabbath to be a day of rest, the Israelites were to plan their work so they could put it aside by sundown on the sixth day. This would enable them to come together on the seventh day for a sacred assembly of worship and teaching. The Sabbath was to be a day devoted to the Lord. By putting a travel limit of 1,000 yards on the people, the rabbis made sure everyone would be present for this sacred assembly every Sabbath.

Some later rabbis invented a tradition that enabled them to get around this limitation. For example, since they were allowed to go 1,000 yards from their home, they defined their home as anywhere their personal

(Jerusalem being larger from Solomon's time on) and the many unwalled villages were even smaller, each city would form a small congregation. Everyone would know each other and would unite in worship and in presenting their needs to the Lord. These small groups were important.

The Law, however, did not limit the Israelites to this weekly sacred assembly. According to Exodus 23:14-17, it called for three pilgrimage feasts: Unleavened Bread (included with Passover in March-April), Harvest (Pentecost in May, which continued as a family feast with the father as the priest for the family), Ingathering (Tabernacles in September-October). This was specifically commanded for the men; however, it was customary for men to bring their families. Thus, the sense of the unity of God's people was experienced as the crowds gathered in the temple courts.

After Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and took most of the Jews into Babylonian exile, the Jews realized that their sins and unbelief had brought God's judgment, and they turned to the Lord. Again, the importance of the sacred assembly and the togetherness of a small group was recognized, and people gathered around those who could teach them God's Word and lead them in worship. From these meetings, synagogues were established.

The Greek *sunagōgē* ("gathering place") was first of all a place for teaching the Law. Philo, a first-century B.C. to first-century A.D. philosopher, called synagogues "houses of instruction, where the philosophy of the fathers and all manner of virtues were taught." In addition to the Law, selections from the

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believed this was the distance between the peoples' tents and the tabernacle during their wilderness journeys. They concluded it was reasonable for the people to travel that far to approach the tabernacle and worship. Rabbis supported this contention further by the fact 1,000 yards around the towns were given to the Levites (Numbers 35:5).

What was the purpose of this limit of a Sabbath day's journey? Leviticus 23:3 identifies the Sabbath as a day of "rest, a

possessions were. They would take a bag of worthless possessions, go 1,000 yards, put down a personal possession, and say, "This is my Sabbath home; I can go another 1,000 yards." By this means, they could go anywhere they wanted. No wonder Jesus said, "You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men" (Mark 7:8).

Since the walled cities were rather small, ranging from 6 to about 23 acres

Psalms and Prophets were read. Prayers and preaching were included in the service. The ruler of the synagogue (Hebrew, *ro'sh hakk'neseth*, "head of the assembly") directed the services and decided who would read from the Law and the Prophets and preach. He would encourage discussion afterward and was responsible in keeping order. Some suppose women were seated in a special gallery, but there is no evidence for this in the Old Testament, the New Testament, or the oldest Jewish writings. During the week, the synagogue buildings were used as community centers and schools for the boys.

Early Christian writings used the word *synagogue* or its Palestinian Aramaic equivalent, *k'nishta*, for Christian churches. From the New Testament, from other early Christian writings, and from archaeology, it is evident that the early Christian assemblies, their services, and their government followed the example of the synagogues.

The Greek word translated "church" (*ekklēsia*, "assembly of citizens") always applies to people in the New Testament. Archaeologists have found

church buildings in Asia Minor dating from the middle of the second century (including baptistries for baptism by immersion). But in the first century there were no church buildings; the people met in homes. Since most of the people lived in one-room homes, wealthier converts would offer theirs, as in the case of John Mark's mother (Acts 12:12) and Lydia, the wealthy dealer in purple cloth (Acts 16:15). As the gospel spread and more people were being saved, the house churches multiplied, each with its own elder (Greek, *presbuteros*, also called *episkopos*, "overseer," a term, which through the Latin eventually developed into the term *bishop*).

In his last journey to Jerusalem, the apostle Paul stopped at Miletus and sent for the elders of the city of Ephesus (Acts 20:17). He also referred to them as overseers and shepherds of "the assembly of God [literal translation] which he bought with his own blood" (verse 28). Note that the singular is used for "assembly," although each elder was the overseer of an individual house church. All the Blood-bought believers were part

of the one universal assembly of God.

Since the Christian believers were not under law, there is no evidence that they had any concern about the limitations of a Sabbath Day's journey. At first, as seen in the Book of Acts, believers gathered "in one accord" (one of Luke's favorite expressions). However, by the time of what must have been largely second-generation Christians, some must have needed the exhortation of Hebrews 10:25: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." The "Day" refers to the coming Day of the Lord, a day we are fast approaching. Believers today need the same exhortation. They need to be encouraged to be faithful to their local churches. 🇪

*\*Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.*

*Stanley M. Horton, Th.D., is professor emeritus, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, and former project coordinator for the Pentecostal Textbook Project, Springfield, Missouri.*

# Encountering Generational Curses

B Y O P A L S . R E D D I N

An earnest young woman approached her pastor prior to the Sunday morning service: “Pastor, would you pray for me?” He asked if there was something of particular concern.

“Yes,” she replied, “I need deliverance from an ancestral curse.”

“No,” the pastor assured her, “you do not have an ancestral curse.”

“But, Pastor, you don’t understand,” she continued, “my dad had a violent temper, and I am also bothered by a bad temper.”

The pastor explained that although she was reacting as her father had, it was learned behavior. The teaching concerning ancestral curse is not scriptural. He reminded her that outbursts of

God’s Word gives both instructions and examples. In the Old Testament, God commanded His people to teach His Word diligently to their children (Deuteronomy 6:7–9). Paul wrote, “Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

Fathers are given the main leadership and responsibility. God said of Abraham, “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord” (Genesis 18:19). Conversely, David was “a man after God’s own heart,” but too busy and too indulgent to discipline his sons (1 Kings

“And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist’s head in a charger.... And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother” (Matthew 14:8,11).

## The Difference Between Influence and Curse

Since the term *generation curse* is not in the Bible, we must ascertain its meaning by literary usage. According to *Webster’s*, a generation is “a single step in the line of descent from an ancestor; the average span of time between the birth of parents and the birth of their children.” A curse is “a prayer or invocation for harm or injury to come upon one; the evil that comes as if in response to imprecation or retribution; to call on divine or supernatural power to send injury upon someone.”

We readily see that a new factor has entered the equation when the term *curse* is understood. Either God or Satan has been invoked and is somehow involved in harm or injury upon the victim. Those under generation curses would be born already destined to commit certain sins, dominated by a force beyond human control. This is a different realm from mere parental influence, requiring some sort of intervention by a power greater than the force of the curse. From this proposed scenario has come the teaching concerning generation curses and the ministry of breaking curses.

## The Popular Appeal of the Generation-Curse Theory

There are many reasons for the popularity of the generation-curse concept. An

**Generation-curse advocates arbitrarily treat the term iniquity as a synonym for generation curse, implying that iniquity is a unique sin.**

wrath are one of the works of the flesh, and the Holy Spirit gives power to overcome it (Galatians 5:16,20). The young woman was relieved and happy as the truth set her free.

## The Power of Parental Influence

When we ponder parental influence, we understand why some believe people can be victims of ancestral curses. It is difficult to overestimate the power of parental example. The primal chance to shape the character of a new human being is an inestimable privilege and an awesome responsibility. Parents can make a home a place of happiness and peace or a living hell.

1:6). He lived to experience the bitter sorrow of a rebellious son’s untimely death. Only a loving parent can fully empathize with David’s lament in 2 Samuel 18:33.

Mothers also wield tremendous influence. Paul congratulated Timothy for “the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice” (2 Timothy 1:5). By contrast, there was a young woman who could be considered under a generation curse, if such were possible. Her dancing was so alluring that her stepfather, Herod the tetrarch, promised her anything she desired. We read the tragic results:

obvious one is the reluctance of most humans to take blame for their wrongdoing. Psychological theories have convinced many people they are not really sinners, but rather victims of society in general and parents in particular.

Most of those who teach the generation-curse concept also claim to be able to break curses for those who come forward in their meetings. In an age of instant everything, the promise of quick moral transformation is appealing.

If the generation-curse teaching is true, then every believer should be involved in getting curses broken. I intend to show it is not true and why it is not true. Every doctrine must stand the test of God's plumbline: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). The Word of God is Truth—inerrant, immutable, and absolute (2 Timothy 3:16,17). We will examine the generation-curse theory by the Word.

### IS THE GENERATION-CURSE THEORY SCRIPTURAL?

Most generation-curse teachers start their scriptural basis with Exodus 20:5,6. To prove their point, they make iniquity a specialized category of transgression. God said, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them (images), nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the *iniquity* of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them *that hate me*; and showing *mercy* unto thousands of them *that love me*, and keep my commandments" (emphasis mine).

#### Is iniquity a unique sin?

Generation-curse advocates arbitrarily treat the term *iniquity* as a synonym for generation curse, implying that iniquity is a unique sin. They believe persons can come under a curse for which they are not responsible; they inherited it. Generation-curse teachers base much of their argument on the use of the term *iniquity*, making it a special kind of sin. They also teach that if a person repeatedly commits a sin, it becomes an *iniquity*

that can be passed down through his or her bloodline.

Is iniquity a special category of sin? No. The biblical languages have a number of terms to express wrongdoing, but all of them mean sin. Parallelism and repetition are common features in the Scriptures: "I acknowledged my *sin* unto thee, and mine *iniquity* have I not hid" (Psalm 32:5, emphasis mine); "And their *sins* and *iniquities* will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17, emphasis mine). Luke 13:27 shows all sinners are "workers of iniquity." The plain fact is all iniquity is sin and all sin is iniquity.

#### What God said in Exodus 20:5,6

No one needs to be misled by generation-curse teaching if careful attention is given to what God said. (1) The term *curse* is not there. God was warning of His judgment on the sin of idolatry, which spawns many other sins. (2) God wanted His people to know an idolatrous culture would have disastrous impact on their progeny to the third and fourth generations. (3) The phrase *third and fourth* is not to be taken as an exact stopping point for the results of sin, because each succeeding generation starts the cycle over again. And—take note—the judgment would fall only on those who hate God.

Generation-curse teachers rarely point out that in the same verse, God

promises mercy to a thousand generations of those who love God. As Paul wrote, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20).

#### Is the family bloodline cursed?

In addition to trying to make iniquity a special kind of sin, generation-curse teachers have attached family to it, resulting in one of their key phrases: "family iniquity." They then say iniquity is passed to persons through the family blood. Here are basic facts with Scriptures for you to pursue further study:

1. The only family totally affected by sin (iniquity) is the human family. By one man sin entered the world (Romans 5:12). As a result of our first parents' sin, all humans have been born with a nature that is inclined to sin (Ephesians 2:3).

2. Every baby is conceived with this sinful nature inherent (Psalm 51:5), but children are not held accountable until they personally commit sin (Romans 5:13). Paul describes coming to the age of accountability (Romans 7:9).

3. The only bloodline that is involved with the sinful nature is that from Adam (Romans 5:17–19) and Eve (1 Timothy 2:14). "[God] hath made of one blood all nations" (Acts 17:26). Human blood may transmit physical diseases, but it cannot carry spirits or

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In a message entitled, “Generation Curse: Is it True?” Eddie Gwin showed the fallacious thinking behind the theory. His words of wisdom bring both heart-searching and comfort: “Your entire lineage may be ungodly; why are you so different? Because you chose to serve the Lord. Some of you righteous parents have wayward kids. It is not your fault. They made the choice.”<sup>2</sup>

Human free will is a mystery, but yet a reality. We respect God’s sovereign wisdom in bestowing this gift on every person. We must never stop praying for unsaved loved ones, and we must never excuse wrongdoing by calling it a generation curse.

### WHO PLACES A CURSE?

One question I have repeatedly asked those who believe in generation-curse teaching is this: If there is a generation curse, who placed the curse? Most evade the question. Some say, “The parents did,” but then they realize Scripture never says that. Furthermore, there is no scriptural basis for saying Satan places a curse (despite all the harm he does).

God himself. He delights in breaking curses as soon as people turn to Him in repentance. A prime example is Nineveh (Jonah 3:10).

One of the most beautiful examples of God’s deliverance is that of Ruth the Moabitess. Because of the Moabites’ unusual sin, God had excluded them from tabernacle worship (Deuteronomy 23:3). This would include Ruth as well as her great-grandson, David. When Ruth said, “Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God,” she was accepted as an Israelite (Ruth 1:16,17). She was singly blessed and placed in the lineage of Christ Jesus (Matthew 1:5).

God’s chosen people should have known better than to ever use a generation-curse excuse for sins. How could they forget their history recorded in Numbers 22–24? When Balaam tried to curse God’s people, he could not. He had to tell the frustrated and furious King Balak, “How shall I curse, whom God has not cursed?... God is not a man, that he should lie.... I have received commandment to bless; and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it” (23:8,19,20). To be a

hating God reap a cumulative effect of God’s judgment.

On the other hand, those who turn from hatred of God and choose to love Him reap something far greater. They become part of a line that reaps *the benefits of God’s love on a thousand generations* of godly people who preceded them. Thus, those loving God will not suffer any judgment or curse from what their parents or ancestors did<sup>3</sup> (emphasis mine).

The Psalmist sang, “He hath remembered his covenant forever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations” (Psalm 105:8). Every person on earth can claim this glorious promise of blessing simply by turning from hating God to loving Him. The moment you turn to Him, you become heir to the benefits of all your godly ancestors. Even if you have to go all the way back to Noah, you do have at least one godly ancestor (Genesis 6:9), and he lived less than a thousand generations ago.

The good news of the gospel is: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ” (Galatians 3:13,14). We need not and cannot add to the finished work of Calvary. There is no curse on those who are in Christ. When you encounter people talking about generation curses, tell them how to receive generation blessings. **E**

**No one needs to be misled by generation-curse teaching if careful attention is given to what God said.**

Finally, the answer is: God places the curse. Then I ask, “Do you think you can break a curse God placed?”

The usual reply is, “I had not thought of it that way before.”

The solemnizing fact is God has indeed cursed sin and sinners (Matthew 25:41). The original curse of Genesis 3 affects every human being and all of creation (Romans 8:19–23). Some examples of specific curses placed by God are: Cain (Genesis 4:11); all who would curse Abraham or his seed (Genesis 12:3); all Israelites who were guilty of sins enumerated in Deuteronomy 27,28; God-robbers (Malachi 3:9). There are others, but none is generational. No one can break a curse placed by God—except

believer, even a newborn one, is to be blessed, and all curse is revoked. No one can bless whom God has cursed, and no one can curse whom God has blessed.

### MERCY TO A THOUSAND GENERATIONS

Stanley Horton, highly respected scholar and theologian, was asked, “Does a Christian need to do something about breaking a generational curse?” He replied:

The so-called generation curse refers to the Second Commandment... (Exodus 20:4–6). The word *hate* in the Hebrew is a participle indicating characteristic or continuous action. Thus, the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who keep on

Opal S. Reddin, D.Min., is distinguished professor emeritus in Bible/theology, Central Bible College, Springfield, Missouri. This article is adapted from chapter 10 in her book, *Power Encounter*.

### E N D N O T E S

1. Neil Anderson, “Finding Freedom in Christ,” in *Dark Angels* (Ventura: Regal Books, 1990), 158.
2. Eddie Gwin, “Generation Curse,” (sermon preached at First Assembly of God in Mountain Home, Arkansas, on 7 March 1999).
3. Stanley M. Horton, “Inside the Bible,” *Pentecostal Evangel*, 14 January 1996, 30.

# Employee Discipline in the Church

B Y L Y N N E H A G G E R M A N

It is not uncommon in the church for an employee to need correction because he\* is performing job duties unsatisfactorily or exhibiting personality characteristics that are interfering with the success of the church. Paul reminded leaders in 2 Corinthians 2:9 to “take responsibility for the health of the church.”\*\* Since the church is the body of Christ, when one part (or employee) is not functioning properly, the entire body (including coworkers and the congregation) becomes dysfunctional.

In Titus 2:15, Paul stated “discipline them if they get out of line. You’re in charge.” Workers in the church are considered leaders by its members. Paul asserts in 1 Timothy 5:20,21, “If anyone falls into sin, call that person on the carpet. Those who are inclined that way will know right off they can’t get by with it. God and Jesus and angels all back me up in these instructions.”

Even with such clear directives, however, many pastors fail to discipline church personnel due to four primary, though fallacious, reasons.

## MISCONCEPTION, ERRONEOUS BELIEF, MISUNDERSTANDING, AND DECEPTION

### Misconception

Some pastors believe that disciplining personnel does not reflect love. However, if discipline is inappropriate in a Christian environment, why did God include Hebrews 12—a chapter devoted to discipline by God and parents—in His Word. Although teachers and coaches are not specifically mentioned in Hebrews 12, most Christians

readily agree discipline is imperative in both schools and sports. Similarly, even though the workplace is not mentioned, pastors should not infer this Scripture is inapplicable to the work environment. The principles of discipline found in Hebrews 12 apply to many situations.

### Erroneous Belief

Other pastors may believe discipline is improper if the worker shows acceptable service in every obligation except one or two. This logic is held even when the weaknesses are in extremely critical areas. Oswald Chambers wrote in *My Utmost for His Highest*, “‘He [Samuel] was afraid to tell Eli the vision’ (1 Samuel 3:15). Should I tell my ‘Eli’ what God has shown me? This is where the dilemma of obedience hits us. We disobey God by becoming amateur providences and thinking, ‘I must shield Eli,’ who represents the best people we know.... God’s message to you may hurt your ‘Eli,’ but trying to prevent suffering in another’s life will prove to be an obstruction between your soul and God. It is at your own risk that you prevent someone’s right hand being cut off or right eye being plucked out (see Matthew 5:29,30).”

### Misunderstanding

Some people think that unsuitable conduct not personally observed by the pastor becomes an untouchable issue. However, if more than one person recounts an identical dilemma with an employee, be assured their concern is legitimate. “A matter becomes clear after two or three witnesses give evidence” (2 Corinthians 13:1).

### Deception

Sometimes pastors fear conflict, confrontation, discord, and the potential repercussion of discipline if the employee is also a church member. This may be compounded by the inability of the employee to find another job if he is fired. The enemy’s use of fear is often effective because it causes pastors to freeze in indecision. Christians are to fear God, not man, for “fear of man will prove to be a snare” (Proverbs 29:25, NIV).

## DECREASING THE OCCURRENCE OF STAFF DIFFICULTIES

Establishing foundational practices will decrease the occurrence of staff difficulties and the need for a pastor to render discipline. Two principles include: hiring the right person in the first place and ensuring that new employees are properly trained. Pastors also need to have job descriptions to use as a gauge in determining acceptable and unacceptable behaviors and attitudes. The key elements of these job descriptions should include quantified duties and required personality characteristics.

It is imperative that a pastor addresses routine problems daily regarding worker performance to avoid a snowball effect. However, even when a pastor asserts his leadership, it is impossible to control the choices made by a subordinate. When an employee decides to disobey, seven disciplinary steps are essential for a successful turnaround of his actions.

**1. Pray and seek the Lord during your Bible study time.** God knows exactly what is in your heart and the heart of your employee. He will furnish you with the precise words to say, as well as prepare the worker for the meeting.

**2. Ascertain whether the trouble is happening because the staff member can't discharge his duties or won't.** Analyze the matter from the employee's perspective. Motives are also important. "The servant who knows what his master wants and ignores it, or insolently does whatever he pleases, will be thoroughly thrashed. But if he does a poor job through ignorance, he'll get off with a slap on the hand" (Luke 12:47).

If the subordinate *can't* execute the job duties, retraining is necessary. If he *won't*, then pastoral directives toward character development are in order. Regardless of why the employee is not performing his duties, he must be held accountable. In addition, it is poor financial stewardship to give tithe money to a nonperforming employee.

**3. Determine the number of chances you will give him to conform.** For a worker who can't perform his duties, give seven chances to allow time for retraining. For the individual who won't, Paul advised, "Warn a quarrelsome person once or twice, but then be done with him. It's obvious that such a person is out of line, rebellious against God. By persisting in divisiveness he cuts himself off" (Titus 3:10,11). Someone who chooses to disobey his supervisor is quarrelsome. For a severe offense, the staff member needs to be terminated without a second chance. Remember, a subordinate does have a choice in his behavior.

**4. Conduct a supervisory self-analysis by asking yourself three questions.** Do you care enough about the employee to let him resign if he is unhappy, or fire him if he chooses to disobey, thus allowing God to use you to provide a "desert" experience? Do you want him to succeed, or are you too angry? Are you treating him the way you would want to be treated? You are not ready to discipline until you answer yes to each question.

**5. Thoroughly collect your thoughts.** Be specific in assessing the behaviors or attitudes the employee needs to adjust, and focus on facts. Be ready to address your observations, standards expected in the future, why the standards are important, and the consequences if the employee chooses to not follow the standards. Indicate in this discussion the number of chances he will have to correct himself before he places you in a position where you will need to terminate his employment.

**6. Hold a meeting as soon as possible.** Tell the employee the day before that you are concerned about him because you have noticed the difficulties he is having in achieving his job description. Ask him to be ready to share his perception of these difficulties as well as viable solutions.

Empower the subordinate to begin the conversation as you guide the discussion. A significant potential exists that he will mention, from his perspective, the very issues that disturb you. If not, pray for the Holy Spirit to lead into the conversation. At the proper time, elaborate on the information you collected. Review with the employee the Scriptures the Lord provided during your Bible study. Commend each strength the worker possesses. Ask the employee to have the Holy Spirit affirm your assertions. Communicate supporting behavioral examples.


If the employee disagrees, ask a senior personnel member to confirm your observations (Matthew 18:16). For change to ensue, it is critical that the worker acknowledges the problem and repents. Do not end the appointment until this happens. A subordinate has a duty to achieve the requirements of the job and obey you (Hebrews 13:17,18).

Encourage the employee to devise solutions while you supply input. Mutually agree on a decision and put it in writing. Be sure to include specific action steps and completion dates. Leave him with the thought from 2 Corinthians 7:16, "I am glad I can have complete confidence in you" (NIV).

**7. After your meeting, catch him behaving right and wrong.** Extend positive feedback when things are working well. When improper actions recur, bear in mind the number of chances you decided you would give him before you would terminate him.

## CONCLUSION

When a pastor chooses to discipline, marvelous payoffs are available for him, the employee, and those whom the employee's life touches. A pastor's mental and physical health does not decline, supervisory effectiveness increases, problems do not snowball, and morale and productivity remain high. The employee experiences a decrease in stress, becomes more Christlike, and continues receiving a paycheck from the church. In addition, he provides a solid nonverbal witness consistent with his verbal witness in any future secular jobs, reflecting the strong work ethic a Christian should exhibit. For people impacted by his previous undesirable behaviors, the pain in their lives decreases due to the cessation of unacceptable actions they were formerly forced to endure from this worker.

Let the Holy Spirit speak to your heart. Has He convicted you of a problem with an employee that is not being properly handled? Is the first step toward resolution repentance from you? Do you need to take hold of your God-given leadership role? Let Him guide you for God's glory. 

*Lynne Haggerman, M.S., is president/owner of Haggerman & Associates, an employment, human resources, management training, and outplacement consulting firm in Springfield, Missouri.*

*\*Employee discipline problems are not gender specific. The masculine pronoun is used throughout this article for readability.*

*\*\*Scripture references are from The Message unless otherwise noted.*

# How To Tell a Great Story

## The Purposes of the Beginning, Middle, and End

BY CRAIG BRIAN LARSON

**T**o tell stories well (biblical stories or otherwise), make sure they have a beginning, middle, and end. This is especially true of the lean stories—lasting from 1 to 5 minutes—that we normally use in sermons. Each part—beginning, middle, and end—is essential and each is different in purpose.

### BEGINNING

The beginning of a lean story has three fundamental purposes.

#### Orient hearers.

In telling a story, we need to provide a minimum of information that sets the story in time and place. Who are the people that begin the story? Where and when is the story happening?

When hearers get insufficient information, they are distracted and often frustrated. They won't fully follow the story or appreciate the story's resolution.

Too much information, however, bogs the story, diminishes interest, and frustrates hearers. Give no more information than necessary. From beginning to end, a story needs *movement*.

"Jesus said: 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.'"

In the two-sentence beginning of this lean story (Luke 10:30–37, NIV), Jesus gave the minimum information hearers needed. How many children this man had, his name, and what he looked like did not affect the point of the story, so Jesus omitted that information.

Audiences like to know whether a story is fact or fiction. With true stories

include specific names and dates to convey authenticity. With imagined stories, tip off hearers with a phrase like, "The story is told of..." or, "In a certain town, a man lived with his elderly mother. We'll call him Bill...."

#### Establish the complication.

Complication (also called conflict, disequilibrium, tension, problem) is what makes a story a story. A mere chronicle of events is not a story: "I went to the store. I bought some eggs. I came home. I watched TV. I went to bed."

A story has plot, and a plot has dramatic tension. "Yesterday morning I went to the store, and when I walked into the fruit section, I realized I had forgotten what my wife asked me to pick up for her. *Uh-oh*, I thought, *she's away from the phone all day, and tonight we're having her parents over for dinner.*"

We must establish the complication in the beginning of the story, because that is what gets attention and interest, and that is where the significance of the story begins.

When possible, though, precede the complicating event with a brief description of what was happening before things got sticky. "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho." This sets up a dramatic contrast. Disequilibrium feels more jarring if listeners have had at least a brief sense of equilibrium. Stories go the full cycle: from normal circumstances to problematic, then to reversal and resolution, and then back to normal.

Be careful, though, to keep this setup brief, without telling some of the ending in the beginning and thereby letting all the tension out of the story. "Yesterday we had my wife's parents

over for dinner, and my neighbor, who always has what I need, saved my neck. I went to the store in the morning, and when I walked into the fruit section...."

#### Show what motivates the key person.

This adds interest and depth to a story. When hearers know why the main person in the story wants to resolve the complication, it increases the tension and the sympathies of the hearer for that person. In other words, hearers care more about what happens.

"Yesterday morning I went to the store, and when I walked into the fruit section, I realized I had forgotten what my wife asked me to buy for her. *Uh-oh*, I thought, *she's away from the phone all day, and tonight we're having her parents over for dinner.* My wife's parents have not spoken to me in 4 years, ever since I made a sarcastic remark about their perfectionist tendencies at a Thanksgiving dinner."

When presenting characters, remember that no one is all good or all bad, perfect in faith or doubt. Real-world ambiguity adds authenticity to the story and keeps it interesting.

"My wife's parents have not spoken to me in 4 years, ever since I made a sarcastic remark about their perfectionist tendencies at a Thanksgiving dinner—ironically, they had forgotten to bring the apple pie."

One exception to this is when you turn the tables on what hearers expect. "A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled,



came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.”

## MIDDLE

The middle of a lean story has two basic purposes that I will discuss together.

### (1) Prepare for and (2) present a strong reversal.

The reversal is the action, insight, decision, or event that triggers the climax. In some stories, the reversal is the climax; in others the reversal leads directly into the climaxing scene that releases the tension of the story.

“But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.”

As the word *reversal* implies, it should have an element of the unexpected. Usually, the stronger the surprise, the stronger the story. But a reversal should not be a complete surprise or entirely incongruous with what has come before; otherwise the story seems unreal. When needed, subtle foreshadowing can make for a more satisfying reversal and climax.

To prepare for the reversal, an effective middle narrates one or more failed attempts to resolve the complication. “A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.” If there are no failed attempts, the story ends with a whimper.

In addition, the middle prepares for the reversal by adding important information: chronicling the necessary chain of events leading to the reversal, adding necessary information about people, elaborating on the complication, introducing new people, foreshadowing the reversal. In terms of drama, the best preparation of all is elements that make the complication progressively worse.

“This dinner was so important I decided to do whatever it takes. I filled my shopping cart with salad items, fruits, meats, breads, desserts. Somehow we would be able to put a decent meal on the table with this mountain of

food. But when I got to the checkout counter and reached for my wallet, my heart stopped: my pockets were empty. Had I dropped my wallet in the parking lot? Had I left it at home?”

The best stories prepare for and present the reversal and climax in a way that makes them understandable, believable, satisfying, moving. For that reason, the reversal and climax will usually be the most fully developed elements in the story. Here you often use the most dialogue, a fuller description of the setting, a prop that symbolizes an important element of the story, the most detailed chronicling of action (without going overboard and killing the pace). Fuller development conveys the message that this is the most important part of the story.

“He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’”

## END

The end of a lean story has three basic purposes.

### Present the climactic scene.

The climax resolves the complication. If the reversal is not the actual climax, then the climax follows immediately on its heels and begins the end of the story.

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the actions of the Samaritan are both reversal and climax.

### Show consequences of the reversal and climax.

In story parlance, this is called the denouement. Briefly show that the reversal and climax did result in a return to equilibrium. In addition, although the story has come full circle, show how people or circumstances have changed.

“That family dinner was a fiasco. Who would have thought it would end up with my father-in-law and me becoming great friends. Hardly a week

goes by that he and I aren’t on the phone about something.”

### Give a sense of closure.

Make sure no loose ends hang from the story that leave people wondering. They will feel the story isn’t over. Be careful not to touch the airplane down on the runway and then take off and land a few more times. Everything in the ending should be brief. The story has been told, the tension has been resolved, and the consequences have been shown. End the story with one strong sentence that has a feeling of finality, and then bridge back into the flow of the sermon in one or two sentences.

“ ‘Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?’ The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’ Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise.’”

Effective storytellers select from a myriad of available details which ones to include in a story and which ones to omit. Understanding the unique roles of the beginning, middle, and end will help you purposefully select the data that make for life-changing stories.

## HANDY CHECKLIST

Does the beginning of my story:

- orient hearers to the story’s characters in time and place?

- establish the complication?

- show what motivates the key person?

Does the middle of the story

- prepare for and present a strong reversal?

Does the end of the story

- present a climactic scene that resolves the complication?

- show consequences of the reversal and climax?

- give a sense of closure? **E**

*Craig Brian Larson is editor of Christianity Today International’s preaching resources—PreachingToday.com and Preaching Today audio—as well as pastor of Lake Shore (Assembly of God) in Chicago, Illinois. He is coauthor of Preaching That Connects (Zondervan, 1994).*

# Catch and Release

BY JESSE MIRANDA

**M**y love for trout fishing goes back to the days when my wife and I pastored our first church in Chama, a village nestled in the mountains of northern New Mexico. We enjoyed the serenity of the woods and the sound of water rushing down the stream. She enjoyed reading a book under a tree next to the stream. I enjoyed wading waist-deep in the stream, feeling the tug on the end of my line, and the thrill of landing a trout, especially a large one. The smell of fish frying in a pan and the delicious meal that followed were the ultimate rewards.

This summer we spent time at the stream. But I also did what I thought I would never do—catch trout and

then release them back into the stream. I knew about the catch-and-release method of fishing, but I never dreamed I would do it. To my surprise, I enjoyed it.

My new practice was surprising because I had learned to fish from people who fished for trout and who hunted game for their survival. There was no other purpose for fishing except for consumption. Most of the church members worked in the lumber mill and railroad for low wages and were unemployed during the harsh winters. The congregation was faithful, but small, and so were the tithes. So I, too, learned how to fish and hunt as a way of life for our survival.

Fishing was also the way of life for some of Christ's disciples. He used these disciples' vocation to transfer lessons to their new calling in the kingdom of God. He told them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Jesus was proposing a radical change. He was offering a transformation. Jesus was calling followers away from a mere livelihood to a lively way of life; from a full stomach to a full spiritual life; from a life of subsistence to a life of abundance; from the physical to the spiritual.

The spiritual lesson I learned this summer as I returned to my old fishing hole was not about catching, but about releasing. I found myself catching bigger trout than usual. I began thinking I was becoming a better fisherman. That is until an old-timer in the village reminded me that 3 years previously there had been a disease that depleted the number of trout in the stream. The Fish and Game Department had a solution: For 2 years there was a limit of two trout per person, and any others a person caught were to be released. The bigger trout I was catching were the ones someone else had released a season or two before. It was not solely my ability as a fisherman but the unselfishness and devotion to the sport by someone who had been in the stream before me.

As Christian leaders we have focused on catching souls and have forgotten the art of releasing lives. To many, catch has come to mean "capture, seize, take hold of, and fasten." But Jesus' call is a means to set free from



**"How are you going to spend my dad's quarter?"**

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confinement, duty, and work. He calls us to give up or surrender a process or duty and devote ourselves to His person. Jesus called His disciples to follow Him, but He later told

captured the laborers. It is a matter of giving up the focus on the process in ministry and surrendering to the Person who calls to ministry—Jesus. He is the one who not only has a

They evangelized and disciplined. They were ordinary, blue-collar workers with a great devotion and a strong desire to serve God. They also possessed spiritual gifts. They were the kind of members every pastor wishes to seize and keep as trophies for a job well done; but for better results (and obedience), he lets go.

I learned that to release what one catches is not easy, but it is necessary to one's way of life. It takes a different mindset and a different set of goals. What was once for consumption is now for investment. Ministry that was once for survival (more tithes, more rent money) is now for recreation purposes. Recreation—not in the sense of refreshment, relaxation, and amusement—but to recreate, restore, replenish, and create anew. Let us then change from survival toward a recreation mode. **e**

*Jesse Miranda, D.Min., is language area-Spanish executive presbyter for the Assemblies of God and director of the Center for Urban and Ethnic Leadership at Vanguard University, Costa Mesa, California.*

**I was reminded that as Christian leaders we have focused on catching souls and have forgotten the art of releasing lives.**

them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15). Jesus brought them in to let them go.

For several years the Assemblies of God has been closing almost as many churches as it has opened. Yet there is a surplus of credentialed ministers in every district of the Fellowship. The question is, "Who will go?" As in the time of Jesus, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Our problem is not in the catching, but in the releasing. First, there is the inability to release from whatever confinement, duty, or work that has

claim and a right to our lives, but also calls us to go. Like Jesus, let us pray not for more workers but for workers with more devotion.

Second is the ability to release or invest people—the release of gifted laity into ministry. The call and the enlisting of laity to ministry are biblical principles and distinct characteristics of the early Pentecostal movement that were inherited from the Wesleyan tradition. John Wesley appointed large numbers of lay preachers to lead neighborhood house churches. They were known as "traveling preachers."

# Undue Influence

B Y R I C H A R D R . H A M M A R

**M**any church and parachurch leaders have had the joy of receiving an unexpected but substantial gift from the estate of a member or supporter. This joy can quickly turn to disappointment when they receive a letter from an attorney for one of the donor's heirs challenging the validity of the gift. In many cases, such challenges allege that the gift is invalid because it was the product of "undue influence."

If a minister "unduly influenced" a donor in making a gift to a church, the donor (or the donor's heirs) may have the gift canceled. This rule applies both to direct gifts made during one's lifetime and to gifts contained in documents (such as wills) that take effect at the donor's death. The same rule has been applied to gifts made to parachurch ministries. Because churches and parachurch ministries are dependent on charitable giving, it is important for their leaders to have a clear understanding of the concept of undue influence. This article will review the definition of undue influence, describe how it is proved, and evaluate the significance of this principle to religious organizations.

## UNDUE INFLUENCE DEFINED

Undue influence is more than persuasion or suggestion. It connotes total dominion and control over the mind of another. As one court noted, "Undue influence is that influence which, by force, coercion, or overpersuasion destroys the free agency" of another.

Undue influence generally must be inferred from the circumstances surrounding a gift, since it seldom can be proven directly. Circumstances

commonly considered in determining whether a donor was unduly influenced in the making of a gift include the following:

- whether the gift was the product of hasty action
- whether the gift was concealed from others
- whether the person or organization benefited by the gift was active in securing it
- whether the gift was consistent or inconsistent with prior declarations and planning of the donor

• whether the gift was reasonable rather than unnatural in view of the donor's circumstances, attitudes, and family

- the donor's age, physical condition, and mental health
- whether a confidential relationship existed between the donor and the recipient of the gift
- whether the donor had independent advice.

Most courts have held that undue influence must be proven by "clear and convincing" or "clear and satisfactory" evidence. Proof by a mere preponderance of the evidence will not suffice. However, some courts have ruled that a "presumption" of undue influence may arise when a gift is made by a church member directly to his or her minister, or when an

attorney who drafts a will leaving a gift to a church is a member of the same church. This presumption is rebuttable.

## CASES RECOGNIZING UNDUE INFLUENCE

In a number of cases the courts have nullified gifts to religious organizations on the basis of undue influence. A few representative examples are set forth below.

*Example.* A 70-year-old invalid dying from cancer was visited several times a

**Many wills leaving substantial portions of estates to churches have been challenged by "disinherited heirs" on the basis of undue influence.**

week by a pastor of her church. Three days before her death, the pastor persuaded her to execute a will leaving most of her property to him. The pastor's personal attorney was called upon to draft the instrument. Two days later, the pastor attempted to have the donor give him additional property by a deed of gift, but by this time the donor was in a stupor and was physically unable to sign her name. She died a day later. The gift to the pastor was challenged on the ground that it was the product of undue influence. The court concluded that undue influence was established by the age and feeble mental and physical condition of the donor, the involvement of the pastor in procuring the gift to himself, the confidential "clergyman-parishioner" relationship that existed between the pastor and the donor, and the lack of any independent advice.

**Example.** Gifts to an Episcopal rector and his church were invalidated on the basis of undue influence since the donor was a 76-year-old woman suffering from arteriosclerosis, senility, and severe loss of memory.

**Example.** The Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled that a provision in a deceased church member's will leaving the bulk of her estate to her church was invalid since it was a product of the pastor's "undue influence." A 96-year-old woman died, leaving the bulk of her estate to the Baptist church she had attended for the last several years of her life. For many years, the woman suffered from alcoholism and during the 1970s her health and living conditions deteriorated. From 1980 to 1983 the pastor of a local Baptist church became closely acquainted with her and visited with her in her home several times. By 1984 all of the woman's friends were members of this church. The pastor arranged for several of them to regularly assist the woman by cleaning her home. Through this process the woman became very dependent upon the pastor and reposed great trust in him. When the woman was 89 years of age, the pastor brought her a "will information guide" and spent several hours assisting her in cataloging her assets. The pastor later asked a church member who was an attorney to contact the woman and discuss the preparation of a will. This attorney had not represented the woman in any other legal matters. Seven years after the will was signed the woman died. Her nephew claimed that the gift to the church should not be honored since it was based on "undue influence." The court agreed, on the basis of the following factors: (1) the person charged with undue influence was not a natural object of the maker's bounty; (2) the stronger person was a trusted or confidential advisor or agent of the will's maker; (3) the stronger person was present or active in the procurement or preparation of the will; (4) the will's maker was of advanced age or impaired faculties; (5) no independent and

disinterested advice regarding the will was given to its maker.

### **CASES REJECTING UNDUPLICATE INFLUENCE**

In the great majority of cases, however, gifts to churches have been upheld despite the claim that they were the product of undue influence. To illustrate, in one case, a court in upholding a gift to a church observed:

If a determined old lady, who knows her own mind and without consulting her children, carries out her own wishes in that regard and buys an annuity contract, can have her wishes held for naught and the contract set aside...then no such annuity can stand in this state against such attack. The entire evidence discloses that the conduct of the officer of this church or organization was above reproach, for, even after she sought them out and asked for the investment, they did not press the matter, but gave her every opportunity to seek other advice and change her desires.

**Example.** A gift of property by an 82-year-old single woman to a Catholic church to assure the saying of masses for deceased members of her family was upheld despite the claims of her nearest relatives that such was not her real intention and that she had been unduly influenced by the church without her family's knowledge or consent. In upholding the validity of the gift, the court noted the following factors: (1) the donor's desire to

make provision for the saying of masses for her family preceded the date of the gift; (2) the donor's will, which had been executed prior to the gift to the church, left nothing to surviving family members; (3) the donor did not conceal the gift; (4) there was no evidence that the donor was in a weakened condition of mind or body at the time of the gift; and (5) she reaffirmed the gift in subsequent letters, one of which was written 5 years after the day of the gift.

**Example.** A South Carolina court rejected a claim that an elderly decedent's will, which left the bulk of her estate to the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), was the product of "undue influence" and accordingly invalid. The decedent executed her first will at the age of 78. This will left 10 percent of her estate to her local church, 40 percent to various relatives, and 50 percent to another charity. At the age of 87, the decedent began changing her will. The fourth and final amendment of her will, executed when she was 88 years old, placed the bulk of her estate

*in a charitable trust, the income from which was distributed to the LCA. The final will was challenged by a beneficiary whose share of the estate had been reduced. The beneficiary argued that the final will was invalid since it had been the product of undue influence. The court acknowledged that undue influence can invalidate a will, but it denied that the decedent's final will had been the result of undue influence. The court observed that undue influence must be proven by*

*the decedent's will had been executed "when she was in reasonably good health, and during her latter years [when] she continued to work in her yard, talk with her neighbors, do some cooking, and go to a grocery store...." In short, she still possessed sufficient independence and health to support the conclusion that "she was the ultimate decision maker." Accordingly, the allegation of undue influence was rejected and the validity of the will upheld.*

**Most courts have held that undue influence must be proven by "clear and convincing" or "clear and satisfactory" evidence.**

*the person challenging a will, and that it consists of "influence amounting to coercion destroying free agency on the part of the [decedent]" so that the will was the result of "force and fear." The court, in rejecting the allegation of undue influence, observed that the final version of*

Other courts have rejected a charge of undue influence where a donor, though 90 years of age, was well-educated and predisposed to making a gift to her church; where an elderly donor had long considered making a gift to his church and was

not close to his parish priest; where an elderly donor was mentally competent and experienced in business affairs, and was the first to suggest making a gift to his church; where a donor's lifetime gifts to her church and minister left her with ample assets for her own support, were not the result of active solicitation by her minister, and were acknowledged with satisfaction several times by the donor during her life; where a donor frequently gave to her church, was capable of making independent business decisions, and was not close to any of her relatives; and where an 84-year-old single woman left the bulk of her estate to a minister who was a friend and not the minister of the church she attended.

#### **SUMMARY**

Church and parachurch leaders should refrain from soliciting gifts to themselves from aged or mentally infirm church members, and they should be very cautious in soliciting

gifts for their organization. However, many courts have concluded that gifts to a church or other religious organization will be valid if:

- a minister merely suggests and does not actively solicit a gift.
- the donor is mentally competent.
- the donor was predisposed to conveying the gift, and
- the donor had independent advice and assistance in implementing the gift.

Many wills leaving substantial portions of estates to churches have been challenged by “disinherited heirs” on the basis of undue influence. Persons bringing such lawsuits often recognize that they have a weak case, but they sue anyway, hoping that the church will quickly “settle” with them to avoid the potential “adverse publicity” associated with such lawsuits. After all, what church wants to be accused publicly of coercing elderly members into making gifts to the church?

If your church or ministry receives a gift under a will that is challenged on

the basis of undue influence, be sure to bear in mind three considerations.

1. Undue influence is very difficult to prove, particularly when the decedent was in reasonably good mental

and physical health at the time the will was executed.

2. In many states, undue influence must be proven by “clear and convincing evidence”—a more difficult burden of proof than the ordinary “preponderance of the evidence” standard. A ministry that becomes aware that an elderly or infirm person is wanting to leave it a portion of his or her estate can reduce the possibility of undue influence by ensuring that the person obtains the independent counsel of an attorney in drafting the will or trust.

3. Ministry leaders should recognize that they have a moral obligation to assist in implementing the estate plans of deceased members so long as they are satisfied that no improper

influence was exercised. If a donor in fact intended that a portion of his or her estate be distributed to the ministry, and ministry leaders too quickly succumb to threats of attorneys hired by disgruntled family members, then they have violated a sacred trust. **e**

*Richard R. Hammar, J.D., LL.M., CPA, serves as legal counsel to The General Council of the Assemblies of God. A graduate of Harvard Law School, he is the author of over 40 books on legal and tax issues for churches and pastors. Copyright 2000.*

**Church and parachurch leaders should refrain from soliciting gifts to themselves from aged or mentally infirm church members.**



# Seven Habits of Highly Effective Worship Leaders

B Y T O M M C D O N A L D

I have observed a common and dangerous thread in many of my friendships with worship leaders across America: They are most susceptible to discouragement if there is a rift in their relationship with their pastors. It seems a worship leader can cope with almost anything—lateness to rehearsals, out-of-tune bass players, the proverbial sound guys—anything except the thought that his\* pastor is not pleased with him.

As with a marriage, the relationship between a pastor and worship leader presupposes mutual respect, maturity, and godly conduct. I subscribe to the maxim: Where God calls, He provides. If you and I have been called to ministry posts as worship leaders, God will grace us with gifts for the mastery of our ministry. But relationships take work. They represent ongoing give and take, and they work best when time is allotted to dream, not dictate; to dialogue, not demand.

If communication is central to a healthy marriage, perhaps the same is

Because these two ministry offices are so valuable to the church, let's consider seven habits for healthy communication.

## 1. A SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS

The Christian life thrives on our ability to forgive. What we do not forgive, we become. Harboring resentment opens the door to bitterness and sets in motion a downward cycle of anger, disloyalty, and gossip. Once polluted, the soul suffers, and the anointing we so desperately need may wane. Let us guard our hearts and live in a daily spirit of forgiveness.

## 2. A HEART OF LOYALTY

Loyalty is a virtue. On a healthy pastoral staff, two types of loyalty exist: upward and downward. Upward loyalty is the kind a worship leader extends to his pastor. For example, if a parishioner complains to a worship leader about the pastor's methods, the loyal worship leader will not validate that parishioner's notions, but will lovingly support the pastor.

## 3. A WILLINGNESS TO SERVE

Beyond the virtue of mutual support evidenced in loyalty, the Scriptures portray our Lord Jesus as a servant. He washed His disciples' feet. I encourage you to look beyond your portfolio of preparing, rehearsing, and presenting worship and move into proactivity with your pastor. Become sensitive to your pastor's needs. On the platform, watch him as he preaches. Take notes. If the sermon speaks to you, telephone or write him. Give him a comforting tap on the shoulder. Pray with him...often. Leadership is a lonely vocation.

## 4. A TRUSTWORTHINESS OF TONGUE

Credibility is proportional. The more painstakingly ardent we are at keeping confidences, the greater our credibility. Just as we would never expose our spouses, we should never violate our pastors' confidence. This is a basic issue of integrity (Proverbs 16:1,32). Families and congregations are built or breached on this solitary ideal. What an irony. The singer's golden tone will quickly tarnish into a brassy tongue of deceit if gossip is given room in our personal or corporate lives. Develop the discipline of the tongue.

## 5. A DESIRE TO SHARE

The ability to be a team player is an asset. I enjoy reading biographies of coaches to gain insight into this concept. Teams win when athletes work together, supporting and defending each other. So do pastoral staffs.

Over the years, I have concluded

**As with a marriage, the relationship between a pastor and worship leader presupposes mutual respect, maturity, and godly conduct.**

true for the sometimes fragile, yet deeply significant relationship between pastor and worship leader. Robert Rhoden, Potomac District superintendent, once told me, "Preaching and worship are the two wings that fly the Sunday service."

Downward loyalty is the kind a pastor gives to his/her staff associate(s).

When loyalty is strong, the devil's darts are repelled. Beware: When a colleague has offended us, our flesh begs for a demonstration of disloyalty.



that secure people share; insecure people hoard, defend turf, and build walls. Sharing ideas, personnel, and departmental equipment with

healers who occasionally conceive a faulty plan or a bad idea. It is then that the pastoral relationship is tested. Some pastors only want yes

Memorize them. Choose to live in the value system the Scripture offers, so when people let you down, you will recall the commitment:

**Any long-term relationship most assuredly contains the element of trust. A pastor must trust his worship leader; a worship leader must trust his pastor.**

colleagues will begin to countermand a hoarding spirit. Yet, serving your pastor with your time is the acid test. When did you last volunteer to assist in the nursery when it was full? or offer to take the beeper as pastor-of-the-day? "Give, and it will be given" (Luke 6:38).

#### 6. A CONSTRUCTIVE CRITIQUE

Any long-term relationship most assuredly contains the element of trust. A pastor must trust his worship leader; a worship leader must trust his pastor. Trust grows as advice is heeded and outcomes prove fruitful. We are, however, human beings—wounded

men. Some worship leaders wear their feelings on their sleeves and cannot handle a constructive word without being temperamental. Somewhere in the middle lies maturity—the ability to assess ideas, an environment of mutual trust and respect. Debunking a bad idea before it goes public is always a gift to a leader who is secure.

#### 7. A COMMITMENT TO LOVE

Ultimately, security only comes through our relationship with Jesus, as we honor His Word. Read 1 Corinthians 13 afresh, keeping your pastor in mind. Focus on verses 4–8.

*Love is patient, love is kind.*

*It does not envy, it does not boast,*

*It is not proud.*

*It is not rude,*

*It is not self-seeking,*

*It is not easily angered,*

*It keeps no record of wrongs.*

*Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.*

*It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always preserves.*

*Love never fails. e*

*Tom McDonald, Ph.D., is minister of music at the Church on the Way, Van Nuys, California, and commissioner of Church Worship for the Assemblies of God.*

*\*While many worship leaders are women, the masculine form is used in this article for readability.*

*\*\*Scripture references are from the New International Version.*

# How To Have an Effective Christian Education Ministry

BY LEROY R. BARTEL

Smaller churches can have effective, vibrant Christian education programs. I am the product of the ministries of a smaller church. The western Montana community where I grew up had a population of less than 2,000. The high school I attended had less than 200 students. Our church never reached 100 in average attendance, yet quite a number of people who were a part of its ministries became ministers, missionaries, and denominational leaders. Additionally, a large group of strong, Christian lay leaders developed within the ministries of that church. Our church was not dull, dry, or deficient—we were a small congregation where God was at work.

The tendency, however, is for smaller churches to stand in awe of the multifaceted ministries of the megachurch and wish they could provide them. All too often the large church is held as the model for the smaller church to follow and pattern after. That is usually a mistake.

Granted, some churches remain small for the wrong reasons. It is tragic when a church is located in a thriving population area and remains small and ineffective because of internal conflict, bad reputation, the inconsistent lives of its members, lack of vision, or poor leadership. On the other hand, a newly birthed baby church is an exciting, living thing with all kinds of potential. A small church in a small community can be more effective in reaching its community than many larger churches.

## DESIGNING EFFECTIVE DISCIPLEMAKING MINISTRIES

In designing effective discipling ministries for the smaller church, it is

essential that we be aware of and sensitive to the unique characteristics of smaller congregations. They are not smaller churches waiting to become large. Smaller churches tend to be relational in their orientation. People are more important than performance. Smaller congregations are usually more intergenerational in their approach to ministry. There is often a strong awareness of heritage and tradition. In fact, they can be clannish and ingrown. There is a strong social dimension in their gatherings. Smaller churches are different, but not inferior.

Christian education is the discipling arm of the church. Christian education ministry is concerned about reaching people for Christ. But it does not end there. Effective Christian education ministries are committed to working with people to help them become deeply devoted and obedient followers of Jesus who are maturing as Christians and using their gifts to build and bless others. It involves Sunday school ministry, but it also involves all ministries with a discipling focus.

How can a smaller church maintain a vibrant Christian education ministry? Here are 10 key principles that will help make this a reality.

### 1. Be clear about your church's mission, vision, and values.

A church's mission statement articulates why it exists. The church's vision provides direction—it states what the church hopes to accomplish. A church that clearly understands its mission and possesses a deep commitment to its God-given vision will develop strategies and invest resources to fulfill them.

These members will express values that prioritize the lost, seek to lead them to Christ, and help them become devoted, mature disciples of Christ. There is no substitute for a passionate commitment to mission, vision, and values shared by church leaders and every member.

### 2. Ascertain your assets and build on them.

Smaller churches possess special features and assets that they can capitalize on to make them effective in Christian education. The accountability of the smaller church, the family atmosphere, and the participatory nature all fall into this category. A key question smaller congregations need to answer is: What do we have to offer people? After these assets are identified, develop strategies to maximize them for discipling ministries.

### 3. Identify and implement a discipling-making process.

Not only do individuals make disciples, so do congregations. Smaller churches need an identified process for discipling-making as much as large churches. In effective churches, disciples are not made by accident, but intentionally—on purpose. What is the logical and biblical process a church can follow as it seeks to make disciples?

*We Build People*, the overarching discipling emphasis of the Assemblies of God, is helpful in this regard. First, a discipling-making church seeks to include people in its fellowship. Second, the congregation has a responsibility to instruct people and help them develop a working knowledge of the Bible, knowing what they believe, while developing the habits of life that will enable them

to become strong, maturing Christians. Third, the church has a responsibility to help believers discover their gifts and abilities, present a strategy to develop them, and begin utilizing them in ministry. Fourth, believers need to develop a heart for outreach to their communities and the world. They also need to develop necessary skills to share their faith with others. Finally, every believer needs to learn to live out a life of worship, prayer, and praise. Effective smaller congregations do not leave this to chance. Their leaders are passionate about implementing this process for every age group.

#### **4. Keep the ministry organizationally simple.**

Smaller churches do not cope well with the challenges of multiple and complex organizational structures. Smaller churches need simple, easy-to-manage structures to succeed. Multiple ministries tax the already limited human leadership resources of the local church. The tragic result can be overworked leaders living on the ragged edge of burnout. The simple, departmentalized, and age-graded organizational structure of the Sunday school is ideal for organizing the ministry needs of the smaller congregation.

#### **5. Feature relationally oriented ministry.**

Smaller churches are characterized by a preference for close, personal relationships. Effective Christian education ministries in smaller congregations will work hard to put people ahead of programs. Teachers and workers will not let anyone slip through the cracks unnoticed. Wise leaders in smaller congregations will ensure that guests are welcomed, new people are incorporated, and the needs of people are met.

#### **6. Mentor leaders and train teachers.**

Instead of large leadership-development seminars, the smaller church depends more on the pastor to personally spend time mentoring promising leaders. In the smaller church, an

effective Christian education teacher training program is nonnegotiable. The pastor takes the leading role in teacher training. He will see that those involved in teaching ministry attend training opportunities that are offered. The concept of training teachers by placing them in team settings with experienced teachers is ideal for the smaller church. The pastor will do everything in his or her power to combat an “anyone with a lesson manual will do” mentality.

#### **7. Involve people in ministry.**

In the smaller church, an exceptional opportunity exists to get a high percentage of believers actively involved in ministry. If the pastor exhibits a high level of commitment to helping people identify their gifts and abilities, this will become a congregational value. Gift discovery, development, and deployment must not simply be an adult issue. A pervasive culture must exist within the church to affirm giftedness in children and provide opportunities for them to begin using their gifts in ministry to the church as a whole. The smaller church has always provided this kind of opportunity. Many who are effective in ministry as adults today discovered their gifts as teenagers and began using them for the Lord in smaller churches. Many smaller churches continue to be a seedbed for ministry development.

#### **8. Actively promote participation.**

Every person who claims to be a Christian needs to be involved in small-group study and application of God’s Word to grow and develop as a disciple. Second Timothy 3:14–17 makes it clear that God’s Word is profitable for all age groups and is indispensable to spiritual growth and maturity. Smaller churches have a unique opportunity to actively promote the participation of every member in small-group Bible study. A variety of opportunities should be established that include Sunday morning and other days of the week and times as well.

#### **9. Build your ministry on proven growth principles.**

There are no shortcuts to productive ministry. Christian education ministries that truly reach and build people are established on well-proven growth principles. Smaller churches cannot sacrifice such things as systematic outreach, enlarging their ministry base, using kinship or friendship networks, creating new units, and developing new leaders with an outward focus, if they expect to grow. These things are not the innovative strategies of large churches with unlimited resources—they are fundamental principles of effective growth for any church.

#### **10. Depend on supernatural power.**

The importance of supernatural power to achieve the goals of Christian education is a critical issue. No church can help people overcome life-controlling habits, destructive patterns of thinking, and demonic power without God’s power. Smaller churches, just like large ones, need to identify the processes they will use to make disciples. However, outward discipleship processes without inward power is an exercise in futility. Prayer, faith, obedience, and divine empowerment provide what is necessary to see lives formed and transformed.

Smaller churches have no need to feel intimidated or inferior in their discipleship efforts. They have many natural advantages that can be used for effective Christian education in their churches. Fundamental discipleship principles work wherever they are used. Smaller churches certainly have access to the same power as large churches—the unlimited power of the Holy Spirit. Smaller churches don’t have to take a backseat to anyone in disciplemaking effectiveness. **e**

*LeRoy R. Bartel is national director of the Division of Christian Education/Commissioner on Discipleship for the Assemblies of God in Springfield, Missouri.*

# Evangelism in the Smaller Church

B Y D A V I D B . C R A B T R E E

I stood alone, scanning the parking lot of my new church. It was 3 minutes before Sunday school and not a single car containing visitors had turned down the gravel lane. I thought of Zechariah 4:10, where God asked, “Who despises the day of small things?” (NIV). At that moment I despised the day of small things. My new post had a 35-year history and 33 people. Morale was low. Our building was secluded on the back of the property. Everything from the burnt-orange carpet to the peeling vinyl entryway to the crooked sign said, “Stay away.”

Worship was stifled and awkward. I didn’t have a novel strategy to help the church grow. Evangelism programs I knew about didn’t seem to fit this congregation, and I was too inexperienced to make appropriate modifications. On that second week in September, I didn’t want to stay at Calvary Church. I wanted to eat a Sunday brunch and start packing. I might have, except for the tan Chevy I saw turning down the lane. I smiled, waved, and slipped inside.

As I remember, we had a banner day that Sunday. Our rule was: If it breathes, we count it. That day we counted 39 people. People seemed pleased with the turnout. That was 15 years ago.

Today Calvary Church is healthy and vibrant. Some transfer growth helped us along the way, though I have learned that people who drift in from other churches usually drift out in short order. A wise elder defined these short-termers as *scaffolding*. They help you build for a while, and then they fold up and move on. We experienced good growth as people moved into the community and became part of the church. But by far,

the most solid growth came through personal evangelism and the joy of the new birth radiating from new believers.

## ESTABLISHING FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS

A small church can engage in effective evangelism if the right climate is established. At Calvary Church, we established foundational truths that set the stage for growth.

### Prayer

The first foundation was, and still is, prayer. I was especially blessed to have faithful prayer warriors among the elderly. Early on we started a prayer meeting, and we have had an organized, ongoing prayer ministry ever since. Our evangelism has risen and fallen in conjunction with our intensity in prayer.

### Evangelism

Having built a foundation through prayer, we affirmed that it is God’s will that every church grow. The Early Church was our example. We became convinced that any healthy body will grow, but it will require time and nourishment. If a church does not experience growth, it has a fundamental problem. No church can move forward without two convictions: that God wants the church to grow, and that people in the church want it to grow. At Calvary Church, we endeavored to create a healthy discontent with the status quo. People soon understood that a static church is a struggling church, and God delights in partnering with us to solve the problem.

With these principles, we simplified

and personalized evangelism. We weren’t anywhere near the commitment level needed to support some of the evangelism programs I wanted to implement, so our focus became people, rather than programs. We determined that evangelism comes down to one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.

The greatest tools for evangelism are not located in a binder-and-tape series; they are sitting in our pews every Sunday morning. Since 86 percent of people who come to Christ are won through the witness of a friend, relative, associate, or neighbor, no church can complain about a lack of resources for evangelism. Every Sunday I am looking at and preaching to my evangelism program.

Several women came without their husbands. Their fervent prayer challenged us to join in the battle for these men’s salvation. One by one we saw these husbands give their lives to Christ. Today, some of these men lead ministries in our church. Most churches would grow by 50 percent if we would reach the immediate families of our members. I have found that more prayer and less push opens the door of a stubborn heart.

One woman drove by our church every morning for 6 years. From time to time she thought about visiting. One day she sat next to a businessman on an airline flight back to Greensboro. The subject of church came up in their conversation. This businessman invited her to church. She visited and her life was transformed. She lived a few blocks away, but she found us at 33,000 feet because one beggar told another beggar where to get bread.

## Discipleship

It takes disciples to make disciples. In most circumstances, the soul-winner is also the logical one to disciple a new convert. If we fail here, we limit the harvest. If we do not train, we cannot sustain. The exponential growth we see modeled in Scripture requires more than a prayer and a hug at the altar. The vibrant enthusiasm of the new believer must be anchored in discipleship, lest our harvest field wither without root. With a nutritious, balanced diet, a healthy church grows like a healthy child. The pulpit and the classroom must take the new believer beyond surface issues.

## Missions

Nothing has stirred people at Calvary Church to evangelism as much as world missions. Familiarity with the status quo breeds contempt. An aggressive missions endeavor raises awareness of the lostness of the lost.

After I came as pastor, one of the first things we did was double the monthly support to our missionaries. A few years later, we became involved in short-term mission trips. Short-term teams magnify awareness and personalize a sense of missions. The majority of short-term team members come back to our church with a new commitment to world missions and a greater awareness of the local mission field. The culture shock of an outreach to an inner city or foreign country reshapes our perspective on missions.

## CONCLUSION

The most underchallenged, underutilized, and untrained potential for evangelism sits Sunday after Sunday, listening to our preaching. The possible impact of this untapped resource is staggering.

On a cold Sunday morning, an old English preacher looked out over a small gathering of poor, tired laborers. He preached without eloquence or response. He thought his time had been wasted. An old man slept on the second row; a young boy sat on the back row with his head down. The old preacher

didn't realize the little boy was Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

David Livingstone received his call in a small meeting of grandmothers. Most of the preaching greats were won to Christ in humble circumstances. In every church pew there is potential, an unmined vein of gold. In every smaller

church there is an unheard—or unheeded—call. Be steady, be seeking, be simple, and be sound. Small is a starting point, not a destination. **e**

*David B. Crabtree is pastor of Calvary Church (Assemblies of God) Greensboro, North Carolina.*

## EVALUATING YOUR CHURCH'S EFFECTIVENESS IN EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

Churches can grow when they effectively minister to the first-time visitor. The following questions will help pastors and churches evaluate their effectiveness in evangelism and discipleship as it relates to those who visit their churches. Look at each of the following items and think about how it applies to your church. What is your church presently doing in each area? Do not look at any individual item as it applies to any single person in your church; respond to each item in light of your entire church.<sup>1</sup>

1. What is your church doing to make first-time guests feel welcome?
2. Does your church have a well-organized greeter ministry?
3. Do people of all ages in your church greet visitors?
4. Do members offer to sit with visitors during the worship service?
5. Do church members invite first-time guests attending your church to Sunday dinner at a restaurant at the expense of the church or church members?
6. Does your church have a new converts Sunday school class?
7. Does your church practice Sunday school evangelism techniques?
8. Does every Sunday school class have one or more persons to follow up on first-time visitors?
9. Does every Sunday school class have persons in charge of its social/community events that are designed for evangelism?
10. Does each Sunday school class offer discipleship training for its members?
11. Do Sunday school classes function as small cell groups for evangelism?
12. Does your church have cell groups outside the Sunday school classes designed for evangelism?
13. Do a large percentage of your church members and regular attenders know your church's vision or mission statement?
14. Does a layperson visit all first-time guests who attend your church within 36 hours of their visit?
15. Have you looked at the possibility of changing your worship music and style to assist in reaching the unchurched people in your community?
16. Does your church plan the worship service and other activities to reach minority populations in your community?
17. Does your church adequately communicate to and successfully reach the younger populations in your church and community?
18. Does your church minister to the five significant generations (seniors, builders, boomers, busters, and mosaics or millennials) in light of their unique identity factors and global perspectives?

—Milton J. Krans is associate professor in the Bible and philosophy department at Evangel University, Springfield, Missouri.

### E N D N O T E

1. These questions were adapted after reading the following books: Thom S. Rainer, *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999); and George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* (Nashville: WORD Publishing, 1998).



# Thriving in the Smaller Church

BY KRISTY DYKES

It was testimony time. We were enjoying faith-building praise reports and the sanctuary was permeated with a spirit of worship. Mr. Goldie, our faithful, senile man from the nursing home, sat in his favorite seat on the second pew. His bushy eyebrows bristled over his large glasses, his mouth dropped open in its usual “O.” Slowly, he stood to his feet and bellowed, “If you want to go to heaven when you D-I-E, then put on your coat and your T-I-E.”

A scene from the best-selling novel, *At Home in Mitford*, you say? No, that’s a scene from our lives. We’ve pastored large churches and small, in big towns and little. While we enjoyed every experience, we have a special place in our hearts for the smaller church.

We’ve had the privilege of living in some unique places. Carrabelle, Florida, was a fishing village on the Gulf of Mexico. Our parishioners frequently took us fishing, shrimping, oystering, floundering, and even shark hunting. Carrabelle’s claim to fame is the world’s smallest police station, which was once featured on national TV. The police station is a phone booth. The police chief parks his car beside it. When people need help, they call him, and he speeds off to assist. My husband, Milton, led the police chief to the Lord and baptized him in the Gulf, along with many others in a thrilling revival that was so unique, the *Tallahassee Democrat* (Tallahassee, Florida) reported it.

Though in many ways it is rewarding to serve as pastor’s wife in the smaller church, there are unique challenges and demands. It is sometimes easy to become weary in well doing.

Early in our ministry we acquired Greener Grass Syndrome. We spent valuable time talking about how much better it would be at our next church. “We’ll have a bigger budget, salary, and facilities,” we’d say. “We’ll have more members, more workers, more ministries.”

One day, the Lord took away our GGS. He showed us that we could spend our time wishing away half our lives and kicking against the goads, or we could enjoy where He had placed us. After this we adopted a philosophy we still live by today: Whatever the Lord calls you to do, He gives you a love for it...if you let Him. That “if” means focusing on the good things in your particular situation—from the church to the town to

first Saturday. She and her husband plan and/or attend departmental events the second, third, and fourth Saturdays.

Other pastors’ wives aren’t as visibly involved, but carry their own heavy personal load. Each pastor’s wife needs to realize that her ministry should be in relationship to her giftings. However, as I willingly responded to the needs of various churches we’ve served—even when I didn’t feel capable—the Lord expanded my giftings.

In the first church we pastored, the pianist played the same octave with her left hand no matter what notes she played with her right. I practiced the piano relentlessly, took organ lessons

**Most pastors’ wives are talented, compassionate leaders who are quick to take on added responsibilities when they see a need.**

the parishioners, and more. That “if” also provides the key to thriving, not just surviving, in the smaller church. Below are four vital areas you, as pastor’s wife, must address.

## MINISTRY TO YOUR CHURCH

Most pastors’ wives are talented, compassionate leaders who are quick to take on added responsibilities when they see a need; and there’s plenty of need in smaller churches where there’s a shortage of workers. Heather\* directs the choir, schedules special music, and produces seasonal musical dramas, besides teaching school. Anne\*, a secretary, puts on a ladies breakfast every

from an accomplished gospel organist, and became the church organist for several of our churches.

## MINISTRY TO YOUR HOME

At a ministers’ wives retreat, the speaker said, “When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I say is, ‘Yes, Lord.’” The next day I spoke on “Family Together Time in the Ministry.” With a big smile on my face and meaning it with all my heart, I told the wives, “When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I say is, ‘What in the world are we going to have for supper?’”

No matter how involved we are in church responsibilities or secular work,

our first priority is to see that the practical needs of our families are met. That's a tall order for the often-harried pastor's wife in the smaller church. But

On these cat-kicking days, as one minister calls them, the pastor's wife needs to be an encourager and wise counselor—without being pushy or

choose a day of the week as their time of refreshment and enjoyment, either separately or together.

Sometimes pastors' wives simply need some quiet time. A scenic view can provide the perfect backdrop. Recently, we visited Little River Canyon in north-east Alabama. A plaque at one breathtaking lookout point read, "Remove nothing from this park except nourishment for the soul, consolation for the heart, and inspiration for the mind." I followed its instructions and was the better for it.

**Though in many ways it is rewarding to serve as pastor's wife in the smaller church, there are unique challenges and demands.**

if we don't strive to make our home a peaceful retreat from the stress of the world and ministry, how can we care for the needs of parishioners? If our homes are topsy-turvy—with laundry piled up and/or meals served at odd hours, or not at all—we are incapable of giving out.

I've waged the battle of becoming too involved in church work. But I can truthfully say I've always kept my family at the head of my to-do list.

If you need help in organization, read books on getting organized. Have a friend teach you how to prepare quick and easy meals. Recruit your family to assist with household chores. Most of all, schedule family-together times—your children will soon be grown and gone.

Beverly, a minister's wife from Florida, says when her children were small, she would take a load of laundry out of the dryer, dump it on the couch while the family was watching TV, and say, "We're all in this together. Fold." She accomplished two things: family-together time and laundry folding... smart. Try skating, bike rides, picnics in the park, walking, playing games—all memory making and money saving; an important dimension in pastoring the smaller church.

### MINISTRY TO YOUR HUSBAND

Too often ministers in the smaller church feel that they are only pastoring a small church. This can result in low self-esteem. They may be dealing with congregants who aren't quick to follow their vision. They might also be dealing with unique feelings relative to their preaching and inadequacies in communicating the gospel.

reactionary. She can reassure her husband with positive statements like, "Church size doesn't determine significance," or, "Small churches can be excellent, effective, and exciting."

### MINISTRY TO YOURSELF

There is an acronym that states: JOY equals Jesus first, Others second, and You last. At least the "you" is included. To be healthy in the ministry, pastors' wives need a time for themselves. Tricia Welborne, an involved pastor's wife and a schoolteacher in Leesburg, Florida, rides her horse at least once a week. Some ministers' wives like to shop for bargains at malls or yard sales. Others enjoy crafts. Some ministry couples

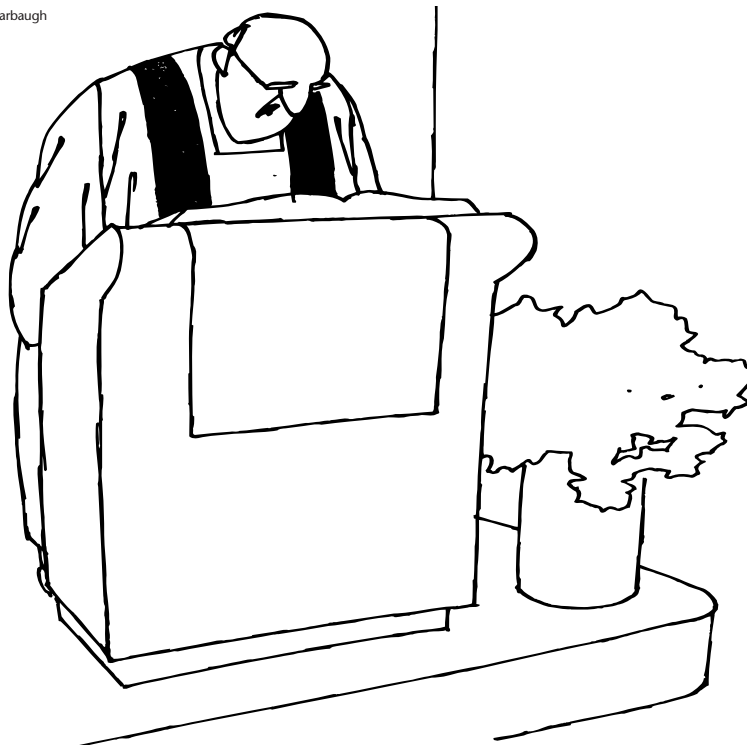
### HIGH CALL, HIGH PRIVILEGE

Someone said, "Never stoop to be a king if God has called you to be a minister." My paraphrase is: "Never stoop to be a queen if God has called you to be a minister's wife—especially in a smaller church." We are hand-picked to do a special work for Him. **e**

*Kristy Dykes is a minister's wife and lives in Tampa, Florida. She is a writer and has coauthored, American Dream, a best-selling work of Christian fiction.*

*\*Names have been changed.*

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**"And Jacob took the stones, and put them for his pillow, and lay down in that place to sleep...zzzzzz."**

# Premarital Coaching

B Y E A R L C R E P S

Getting married can be dangerous business. Romantic promises and solemn vows are no longer enough to ensure the survival of a family. Baby boomers, for example, are 500 percent more likely to divorce than were their parents. Consequently, 40 percent of Generation X has endured a family breakup firsthand.

Painful family history has been one force driving young adults to delay marriage. A 20-something man recently

imagery, thousands of hopeful couples find they simply lack the resources to go the distance. Ultimately, they settle their differences in court rather than in prayer. Perhaps most disturbing is the fact this outcome is at least as prevalent among Christians as it is in the general population.

Even those who seek assistance from clergy often find it to be scattered and inconsistent.<sup>1</sup> If help can be found, it

## PREMARITAL COACHING MODEL

This article describes a coaching model that enables a pastor to incorporate the strengths of a variety of formats into a customized, flexible way of helping couples. The Premarital Coaching model uses the other methods as a toolkit rather than as ends in themselves. The use of these tools is governed by five values:

**1. Outcome-driven.** This process is successful only if marital happiness increases and the divorce rate decreases. Conducting wedding ceremonies measures nothing. Breaking up a couple who should not marry in the first place is considered a success.

**2. Coaching style.** The pastor serves as a facilitator of the couple's emotional and spiritual growth. His or her task is to create the conditions in which this growth takes place, rather than to be an expert on every possible aspect of matrimony.

**3. Empowerment.** Each precouple is responsible for completing the phases of the counseling model. It's their future, so they are required to fully participate in the process.

**4. Peer power.** Currently married couples work with the precouple to sensitize them to real marital issues.

**5. Flexibility.** Since couples enter the process from many starting points, the model can be targeted to their most relevant issues.

**6. High expectations.** No couple will be married without completing the PMC process or its equivalent. This commitment is rooted in the church's decision that failure to prepare couples is both unscriptural and unethical.

The PMC model offers one practical method for marshalling the resources needed by the precouple. Management

**While there are many positive things to report about families, we cannot ignore the crisis in the American home.**

told me he would rather run the risks of the singles scene than face what seems like certain disaster in marriage. With over 1 million couples divorcing annually, I found it hard to argue.

While there are many positive things to report about families, we cannot ignore the crisis in the American home. Michael McManus has called family dissolution "the central domestic issue of our time."

The roots of this issue are deep and complex. Economic changes and cultural forces have all contributed. However, one of the most obvious (and most overlooked) causes is the astonishing lack of premarital preparation most couples receive.

## THE MOST COMMON PREMARITAL COUNSELING METHODS

More training is required to flip burgers at a fast-food restaurant than to become a husband or wife. Armed only with guesswork, family history, and media

most likely depends on the background and personality of the pastor involved. Among the options offered to couples are methods such as these:

- **Master of Ceremonies**—focuses on the wedding with minimal relationship training. Basically, just a Christian justice of the peace. Premarital counseling in name only.

- **1:2 Counseling**—uses meetings between the pastor and couple as the delivery vehicle for training. Largely a pastoral monologue on topics such as expectations or communication.

- **Group Process**—three or four precouples meet with a professional counselor who introduces marital issues using a combination of brief presentations and peer interaction.

- **Couple Evaluation**—like 1:2 counseling except this uses a professional who often employs psychological evaluation instruments to measure things like compatibility.

of the process does not require the pastor to be a therapist, only that he or she be a shepherd. PMC allows pastors to pastor and counselors to counsel. The section below describes the model in a form that can be readily used in the counseling process.

## IMPLEMENTING THE MODEL

**Objective:** To empower couples for marriage by reducing uncertainty, increasing relationship skills, and enhancing mutual understanding.

**Method:** A phased, couple-driven process.

**Premises:**

- The couple is responsible for the effort necessary to complete the process.
- The church is responsible for structuring and managing the process.
- The couple maintains a weekly accountability relationship with peers of the same sex throughout the process.
- The church staff does not perform weddings for couples who do not complete the process or its equivalent.

### Phase One: Intake

**Objective:** To evaluate the basic marriageability of the precouple, assess risk factors, and explain the model.

**Resources:** Pastor, church office staff, church wedding coordinator.

**Process:** Meeting for an intake interview at precouple's request. The pastor reviews the intake form with them at the interview. At this stage, the precouple:

1. obtains copy of the church's wedding policy from the office.
2. reserves the date on the church calendar and the rooms for the ceremony and reception.
3. pays the fee for use of facilities.

### Phase Two: Surprise

#### Option #1: Study and Dialog

**Objective:** To reveal unspoken expectations.

**Resource:** H. Norman Wright, *Before You Say, "I Do"* (workbook). One per person, paid for by the precouple.

**Process:** The workbook has 12 chapters. The precouple answers the questions separately, discusses their answers together, and then reviews key points

with the pastor in a 2:1 session.

#### Option #2: Engaged Encounter

**Objective:** To discover how the precouple relates to each other and to the marriage relationship.

**Resource:** Assemblies of God Engaged Encounter (see Premarital Resource List)

**Process:** The couple spends extended sessions with other couples at a local church dialoging about critical marriage issues. EE is strongly recommended for any precouple. They review their findings with the pastor in a 2:1 session after the weekend.

#### Phase Three: Reality 101

**Objective:** To expose the couple to the

real world of married life outside their family of origin.

**Resource:** Three mentoring couples: newlywed, midlife with children, and senior citizen.

**Process:** The precouple meets with each of the mentoring couples in a casual environment using questions developed by the precouple for dialog. If a married couples Sunday school class is available, the precouple joins it several months before their wedding. This further connects them with married peers and gives them additional instruction on marriage issues. The precouple gives feedback to the pastor on their peer experiences in a 2:1 session.

## PREMARITAL RESOURCES

### ORGANIZATIONS

#### Engaged Encounter

A weekend event for engaged couples held at a local church. It features intense presentations by peers and personal dialog on marriage issues. Very effective and highly recommended. Contact Assemblies of God Engaged Encounter at 1-800-599-8226, or [www.agme.org/agee.asp](http://www.agme.org/agee.asp).

### EMERGE MINISTRIES

Provides outstanding training materials for pastors, acquainting them with a full range of psychological, counseling, and marital issues. Excellent for helping couples prepare for matrimony. Contact EMERGE at 330-867-5603.

### MARRIAGE SAVERS RESOURCE COLLECTION

Offers an outstanding multimedia kit that provides resources to prepare couples for marriage and to help hurting relationships. Strong emphasis on peer counseling. Contact Michael McManus, 1-301-469-5870.

### BOOKS

Wright, H. Norman, and Wes Roberts. *Before You Say, "I Do."* Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1997.

Wright, H. Norman. *So You're Getting Married.* Ventura: Regal Publishing Company, 1997.

Parrott, Les, Leslie Parrott, and Michael McManus. *Mentoring Engaged and Newlywed Couples.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.

### TESTING INSTRUMENTS

#### PREPARE:

A highly effective inventory that is administered to couples to spot potential areas of strength and weakness in their relationship. An excellent tool for premarital counseling. Requires training to administer, but also used by many mental health professionals.

# PREMARITAL COUNSELING INTAKE INTERVIEW

## PRECOUPLE CONTACT INFORMATION

Prebride: \_\_\_\_\_ Pregroom: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## INTRODUCTIONS:

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Job: \_\_\_\_\_ Job: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Student: \_\_\_\_\_  
 How did you meet? \_\_\_\_\_

## ASSESSMENT:

1. Why do you want to be married? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Has either of you been married before? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do either of you have children? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What are your spiritual backgrounds? Are in you agreement on spiritual issues? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What are your educational backgrounds? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Have you ever split up, or wanted to? Why? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Has there ever been physical, verbal, or emotional violence between you? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How much debt will you bring into the marriage? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Have either of you come from a broken home? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How do your families feel about your marriage? \_\_\_\_\_
11. When you fight, what is it usually about? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Was either of you raised by substance abusing parents? \_\_\_\_\_

## EXPLANATION

Review Premarital Counseling Intake Interview and PMC process with precouple.

### Phase Four: Nuts and Bolts

*Objective:* To use the behavioral sciences to enrich the precouple's preparation.

*Resources:* Local Christian mental health professional.

*Process:* The precouple arranges for group or individual premarital counseling

with a Christian mental health professional and provides feedback on the process to the pastor in a 2:1 session.

### Phase Five: Money

*Objective:* To clarify financial issues for the couple, lowering the risk of conflict

and increasing financial stability.

*Resource:* Pastor or recommended financial professional.

*Process:* The precouple creates a prototype monthly budget and then spends a session with the coach reviewing it and discussing insurance, retirement options, savings, and any other financial information. If the precouple is doing well on this issue, other concerns such as stepparenting or communication can be substituted.

### Phase Six: Ceremony Preparations

*Objective:* To assist the precouple in planning a wedding that will honor God and honor their commitment to each other.

*Resources:* Pastor, wedding coordinator.

*Process:* The precouple meets with the pastor and wedding coordinator to review ceremony details, with follow-up as necessary, leading up to the rehearsal.

© 2001 George Crenshaw



**"Marriage is a blessed relationship—a union in which each partner gives mutual devotion and respect to the other. Now let's all have a laugh and get down to business."**

## MANAGING THE MODEL

- **Intake interview.** The precouple meets with the pastor to become familiar with the model and to begin Phase One. The Intake Interview Form (see sidebar) is filled out in



the intake session and the results used by the pastor to discuss marriageability, compatibility, and risk factors.

- **Accountability.** The precouple informs the pastor of the names of their weekly accountability partners. The role of the partners is to help the couple maintain a standard of right living during their engagement. The pastor checks on the status of this accountability relationship at every session.

- **Reflection.** The precouple meets with the pastor:

- for the intake interview.
- after phases 2, 3, 4, and 5.

The precouple makes their appointments. The pastor's role is to elicit feedback from the couple on the conclusions they are drawing and the learning they are doing in each phase. He or she helps them to discover unresolved issues and unspoken expectations.

- **Flexibility.** The model described above contains more resources than many couples actually need. The pastor can combine, eliminate, or expand the

modules as necessary to fit the situation. Remember, the modules are tools to be selected, not tracks on which every couple's experience must run.

- **Circuit-breaker.** At any point in the process, the pastor may recommend that the couple not marry.

### CONCLUSION

Effective use of the PMC model depends on the pastor's personal commitment to preparing couples for marriage within the church. This commitment can be strengthened by becoming part of an area-wide premarital counseling covenant in which local churches all agree that weddings will be performed only for couples who have received quality training.

Successful management of the model also requires that the pastor be familiar with the full range of issues pertaining to marriage and the biblical perspective on those issues. He or she need not be an expert, but should be a student of the field. Engaged couples deserve that and have a right to expect it. The PMC approach will

be most effective for pastors who could do premarital counseling without it.

The PMC model is well suited to the pastoral role. It focuses on the ability of the pastor to care for people and to coordinate resources that will empower them to grow. With respect to marriage, he or she is "equipping the saints" rather than trying to be a pale imitation of a mental health professional. A coaching approach allows every minister to operate in his or her giftedness as part of a team effort. When the body of Christ works properly, every couple can have the best possible chance to love their marriage. **e**

*Earl Creps, Ph.D., is director of the doctor of ministry program at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.*

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E N D N O T E

1. Jennifer L. Barlow, "A New Model for Premarital Counseling Within the Church," *Pastoral Psychology*, September 1999, 4.

# Preliminary Planning for Your Church's Capital and Facility Needs

B Y R A N D A L L K . B A R T O N

Land acquisition, master site plans, relocation, zoning ordinances, architects, engineers, financing, space planning, construction—the list could go on. A pastor could (and should) be intimidated by the complex array of responsibilities in planning for the capital and facilities needs of a church.

A disciplined approach to planning will help you achieve your God-given mission and ministry through appropriate and professional capital and facility development.

## STEP #1: ALIGNING THE VISION

The first step in planning is to fully understand the history, ministry, growth patterns, and shared vision for the future of your church. This step might include a formal, strategic-planning process that develops and defines a vision for the future. At a minimum, you need to conduct adequate surveys, interviews, and focus groups to clearly understand the collective heartbeat from the various constituencies represented in your congregation.

Too often a particular vision may not be shared or understood by the entire board, staff, key volunteers, or even a majority of a congregation. This step allows for a vision that is clarified, defined, and developed into a shared vision to create alignment within the local church. That alignment empowers the church to proceed with its capital and facility-planning program.

## STEP #2: FEASIBILITY OF THE PROJECT

Unfortunately, even some of the largest and most sophisticated congregations can stumble when it comes to assuming the feasibility of their project.

A national firm specializing in planning for the capital needs of churches found that 8 out of 10 churches had to scrap all or a portion of their original architectural drawings because the cost was more than the church could afford. This phenomenon is not because of incompetent architects; rather, architects were asked to prepare plans for a church before the church had adequately completed its planning processes.

In assessing project feasibility, the following factors need to be included in the process:

### Data Collection

What are the existing usages, current needs, and future needs for the various ministries of the church? As the old architectural adage states, “Form follows function.” How many square feet are currently needed for each area of ministry, for immediate expansion, and for future growth? What furniture, fixtures, and equipment are needed? This fact gathering should involve those currently in ministry, including staff and volunteers.

planning experts. The purpose of this analysis is not to redefine your ministry needs, since each church is unique, but to assure adequate relationships between allocated space, seating capacities, common areas, and support facilities such as parking.

### Budget-Range Analysis

Now that you have your data, it's time to look at a budget range. This must occur before any architectural plans are started. The data collected and analyzed is measured against generally acceptable construction costs for your geographic area. There are standard reference guides for construction costs, but the best guide is the experience of other congregations in your area. You must have enough information to know clearly the range of construction costs. By acquiring specific information from other congregations, you can also start making qualitative decisions on the type of construction you can afford. You should now have both a range of square footage needed and a range of construction costs that should be put on a matrix.

Type of Construction	Cost per sq. ft.	Minimum 50,000 sq. feet	Preferred 75,000 sq. feet	Future 100,000 sq. feet
High End	\$100	5 million	7.5 million	10 million
Medium	\$ 80	4 million	6 million	8 million
Economy	\$ 60	3 million	4.5 million	6 million

### Data Analysis

From the data gathered, you should be able to generate a preliminary space-needs analysis. Your space-needs analysis should then be measured against national norms available through

As one can see from the above table, a project could be defined within a budget of \$3 to \$10 million just for construction costs. If you include land acquisition, site development costs, and soft costs in excess of normal budget

limits, the range and variables of costs may even become more pronounced.

### Setting a Square-Footage Limit and Cost-Per-Square-Foot Limit

Now is the time to make hard decisions. You need to determine the general quality of construction and quantity you can afford. This may force you to consider a phased project or to consider construction methods and materials that are more in line with what you can afford. You should determine an initial project scope and project budget that can be used as a guideline before preliminary master planning begins.

### STEP #3: PRELIMINARY MASTER PLANNING

Although your money would have been well spent contracting church-planning consultant professionals to assist with visioning and your project feasibility analysis, this step is always the time to contract professional assistance.

A master plan is needed for most projects of any size. The purpose of a master plan is to determine a 5-, 10-, and even 20-year planned use of a particular property site. This step should include an analysis of a current site to determine its appropriateness for your ministry's expansion. It might mean a relocation study.

Master planning your facility involves a number of important steps, including:

- Church leadership should visit church facilities of similar size and different approaches to meeting space requirements, spatial relationships, and design themes. Church leadership should express planning preferences through this step. Word of caution: If your budget is \$70 a square foot, don't visit a church with a \$120-a-square-foot solution. It will confuse the process and result in a substantial gap between vision and reality.
- Data collected in the earlier phases should be used to develop space-requirement and spatial-relationship diagrams.
- With space requirements, spatial relationships, and design themes recommended, floor designs and preliminary site plans can begin for the first time.

Drawings of possible exteriors consistent with the desired themes should be completed. Unfortunately, many projects begin with this step and, as a result, end in disaster.

- Specifications are needed at this phase to clarify quality, construction, materials, grades, and other matters to ensure your project master plan is complete within your preliminary budget guidelines.

### STEP #4: FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY

Now that you have a concept master plan, you need to conduct a financial feasibility analysis. Most facilities today include a combination of a capital gifts campaign and debt. Obviously the more you can raise through a capital campaign, the less long-term debt is needed. This frees up substantial resources for ministry.

How much can we raise? Most Assemblies of God congregations raise from one to two times their annual general fund budget through 3-year commitments in a professionally led capital campaign. A conservative preliminary study should use a multiplier of "one," taking into consideration the funding will be received over 3 years.

Your debt service should not exceed 35 percent of your operating fund income. For example, a congregation with a \$1 million budget could afford

the following:

Capital Gifts Raised	\$1,000,000
Debt Service Coverage	\$3,500,000
Affordable Project Costs	\$4,500,000

This suggests that the church could afford 75,000 square feet of economy construction, or if it wanted to develop nicer medium- or high-end facilities, it would have to settle for 50,000 square feet and carefully design for immediate phasing of the project.

### CONCLUSION

After completing these steps, you should have:

- a clearly defined shared-ministry vision translated into facilities.
- a preliminary master plan.
- a preliminary financial plan.

It is now time to make the most critical decision of the entire process. Do you hire an architect? Do you consider a design-build contractor? What are reasonable architectural fees? What are reasonable construction management fees? While there is no single answer, a church should consider and discuss the benefits and challenges of these various approaches. **e**

*Randall K. Barton is CEO, Assemblies of God Financial Services Group, Springfield, Missouri.*

# S E R M O N S E E D S



## GET READY FOR GOD'S BLESSINGS

Joel 2:12-29

### INTRODUCTION:

*The blessings of God*—such a common expression. How do you define the blessings of God? For some, it relates predominately to earthly things and material possessions. For others, it means a particular type of worship service. More appropriately defined, the foundation for the blessings of God is in the restored relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Do not restrict your understanding of the blessings of God to only one or maybe a few segments of life. Here are some aspects of receiving God's blessings.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. Recognition.

- a. Of personal need (Joel 1:4,13,14; 2:1,12,13,15-17).
- (1) A deterrent to receiving the blessings of God is to assume that you have no spiritual need.

**Illus.** The rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-30)

- He kept the law of Moses.
- Jesus spoke of love for money. The ruler was not willing to acknowledge his greed.

- (2) With recognition of need comes repentance.
- (3) When finding fault in others, you do not allow the Holy Spirit to reveal your need.

- b. Of divine sovereignty (Joel 2:18-20).

- (1) The eternal plan of Almighty God cannot be altered by man.
- (2) Isaiah 48:11—"For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another." He has given us His name.
- (a) Moses. "The Lord shall fight for you" (Exodus 14:14).
- (b) David. "When thou hearest the sound of a going [marching, military term] in the tops of the mulberry trees...for

then shall the Lord go out before thee" (2 Samuel 5:24).

- (c) "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper" (Isaiah 54:17).

- c. Of unfailing promises (Joel 2:21-27).

- (1) The major emphasis is restoration.
- (2) There are 32,000 promises in Scripture.
- (3) Balaam's word to King Balak, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19).

- d. The first step to the blessings of God is to recognize personal need, God's sovereignty, and the certainty of His promises.

#### 2. Requirements.

- a. The blessings of God cannot be purchased, yet there are requirements to receive them.
- b. The promises of God's blessings are conditional. God, who freely gives what is not deserved and cannot be earned, has set forth the parameters by which His blessings are received.

**Illus.** Widow gathered empty vessels and from one jar of oil filled all vessels and paid the debt (2 Kings 4:1-7).

- c. Two aspects of conditional blessing:

- (1) Faith.
  - (a) Faith must be in God; He will take care of the outcome. Be careful not to focus on results.
  - (b) "But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6)
- (2) Obedience.
  - (a) There is often a pre-miracle and post-miracle requirement.
  - (b) Raising of Lazarus from dead (John 11).

- Roll away the stone (pre).
- Remove the grave clothes (post).

- d. Couple faith with obedience. Without one the other is incomplete/insufficient to receive His blessings.

#### 3. Response.

- a. God is a God of purpose. His blessings are for our benefit and His glory.
- b. Two major responses come into focus:
  - (1) Willingness to change.
    - (a) The old man must be put off and new man put on.
    - (b) "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20).
    - (c) We need to change from a victim mentality to a victor.
  - (2) Ready to accept responsibility.
    - (a) God's blessings are not for selfish enjoyment. "Unto whomsoever much is given, much is required" (Luke 12:48).
    - (b) God's blessings do not mean that you are superior to others.
- c. Response to God's purpose is a factor in determining the quality/degree of blessing you receive.
  - (1) Material blessing.
  - (2) Ministry gifts.
  - (3) Spiritual blessings.
- d. God's resource is unlimited, unequaled, and unfailing.

### CONCLUSION:

First, come before Him in soul-searching and repentance. Keep an open, honest heart before the Lord. Further, you receive what you expect in faith. Faith/obedience will ensure God's blessings. Finally, be willing to change. Be willing to accept the responsibility of sharing Christ's love and goodness. Let's be ready for God's blessings.

—H. Maurice Lednický, Springfield, Missouri

# S E R M O N S E E D S

## HEAVEN'S GREAT THANKSGIVING DAY

*Revelation 19:1–9*

### INTRODUCTION:

Throughout the Book of Revelation, there are accounts of rejoicing in heaven. Handel's famous "Hallelujah Chorus" from *The Messiah* is based on the last and most climactic of these scenes (Revelation 19:1–8), where the expression *alleluia* (or *hallelujah*) is recorded four times. This grand thanksgiving takes place just before the glorious revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ (verses 11–16).

### MESSAGE:

1. A great voice of many people (verse 1).
  - a. Praising "the Lord our God" (verse 1).
  - b. Extolling His righteous judgments (verse 2).

- c. Rejoicing over His judgment of Babylon, His avenging her shedding of blood of martyrs, and her everlasting doom (18:20,21; 19:2,3).
2. The voice of the 24 elders and the 4 beasts (verse 4) who:
  - a. Fall down and worship God who "sits on the throne."
  - b. Say, "Amen [as though in accord with the preceding group]; Alleluia."
3. The voice out of the throne (verse 5).
  - a. Directs all God's servants, and those who fear Him "both small and great" to praise God.
4. The voice of a great multitude.
  - a. Declaring "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (verse 6).

- b. Resolving to "be glad and rejoice," and to give honor to God (verse 7).
- c. Announcing "the marriage of the Lamb is come" (verse 7).
- d. Affirming the readiness of "his wife" (verse 7).
- e. Describing her clothing (verse 8).

### CONCLUSION:

The invitation has been issued for "whosoever will" to be present at this grand event, and those who accept will be blessed (verse 9).

—F. Helen Jarvis  
Adapted from Advance.

## RECONCILED TO GOD

*2 Corinthians 5:17–21*

### INTRODUCTION:

Reconcile: "To restore to friendship or harmony" (*Webster's*). The story of the Prodigal Son illustrates reconciliation. The son was on unfriendly terms with his father. His father forgave him and welcomed him back into the household and into the friendly, harmonious relationship he once had.

### MESSAGE:

1. Reconciliation is our experience (verse 17).
  - a. At one time we lived in darkness and disharmony with God. By His grace we have been brought into harmony and friendship with our Creator.
  - b. The old person is gone and the new has come. A life reconciled to God is

- easy to distinguish from the old life of sin (Galatians 5:19–25).
2. Reconciliation is our message (verse 19).
  - a. Our message is not political or our personal opinion. The church's message must center around reconciling people to God.
  - b. The message of reconciliation is this: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (verse 21, NIV). Jesus was our substitute on the Cross and has imparted His righteousness to us.
3. Reconciliation is our ministry (verse 18).
  - a. It is not enough to preach a message of reconciliation. People need assistance in their walk with God. They need some-

one to pray with them, to teach them God's Word, and encourage them in their new life (Ephesians 4:11–14).

### 4. Reconciling people to God is our passion (verse 20).

- a. We "implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (NIV). To implore means to beg or plead. We are passionate about bringing people into a right relationship with God.
- b. We are passionate because we believe in eternity. Every person will stand before God and give an account (Matthew 25:31–46).
- c. We are passionate because we care about people. Everyone who is born of God loves people (1 John 4:7,8).

—Danny Royer, Logan, Utah

## THE NEWS REPORTER'S PSALM

*Psalms 150*

### INTRODUCTION:

In writing a story, a newspaper reporter is taught to remember five "W's" and an "H." The news article is not complete unless the writer answers the questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How? Psalm 150 answers all these questions on the subject of praise.

### MESSAGE:

1. What is the theme of the Psalm?

- a. Expressing praise to God (verses 1–6).
- b. Exhorting all to praise Him (verse 1).
2. Where is God to be praised?
  - a. In His sanctuary (earthly temple or church) (verse 1).
  - b. In the firmament of His power (the heavens) (verse 1).
3. Why is God to be praised?
  - a. For His mighty acts (verse 2).
  - b. According to His excellent greatness or sovereignty (verse 2).
4. How is God to be praised?

- a. With the trumpet (verse 3).
- b. With the psaltery and harp (verse 3).
- c. With the timbrel, dance, stringed instruments, organs, cymbals (verses 3–5).
5. Who should praise God?
  - a. All that have breath (verse 6).
  - b. All who read the Psalm.
6. When is God to be praised?
  - a. Always (verses 1–5).
  - b. In private and in public (Ephesians 5:19,20).

—Olive W. Alford



# S E R M O N S E E D S



## THANKSGIVING

*Philippians 1:1–11*

### INTRODUCTION:

Philippi was the first European city to hear the gospel. Paul and Silas were imprisoned there on their second missionary journey (1 Thessalonians 2:2).

Paul loved the people in this city. He was filled with thanksgiving for those who had joined him in proclaiming the gospel. As we pray for our spiritual leaders, support them financially, and cooperate with them, the church will grow and become strong.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. The people (verse 1).

- a. Servants. Paul and Timothy were servants (slaves) of Jesus Christ.
  - (1) Paul, who once persecuted Christians, became a preacher of God's Word.
  - (2) Timothy was Paul's spiritual son.
- b. Saints. The Christians at Philippi.
  - (1) Bishops were the overseers of the church.

- (2) Deacons were church leaders.
2. **The praise (verses 2–5).**
  - a. Prayer (verse 2).
  - b. Praise (verse 3). Paul thanked those who helped him.
  - c. Pleasure (verses 4,5). It was Paul's pleasure to pray for those who were a help and blessing to him.
3. **The promise (verses 6–8).**
  - a. Promise (verse 6). God will complete the work He has started in you. (Compare with Ephesians 2:10.) He can and will complete this work if we cooperate.
  - b. Pain (verse 7). The people shared with Paul the pain, as well as the joy. Note how we are all members of one body, and need the cooperation of each member.
  - c. Personal (verse 8). Paul longed to be with the Philippians. He enjoyed their fellowship. (See Psalm 133:1; 1 John 1:7.)
4. **The prayer (verses 9–11).**

- a. Prayer of faith (verse 9). Faith causes one to have more love, and to grow in the Lord. (Note 2 Peter 3:18.)
- b. Prayer of faithfulness (verse 10). Being faithful to His Word, as well as His will. Live so no one can find fault in you. (Note the example of Daniel, Daniel 6:4.)
- c. Prayer of fruitfulness (verse 11).

### CONCLUSION:

Wherever Paul went, he won people to Christ. He then sent letters to encourage these new converts. Do we win others? Do we help and encourage others? Paul never forgot to thank those who helped him. Not only should we thank God for what He has done, but we should thank those who have helped us. One of the most needed words in our world is *thanks*.

—Croft Pentz, Waynesboro, Pennsylvania

## WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY

*Joshua 1*

### INTRODUCTION:

Many have had to overcome their fear during a crisis. Joshua faced personal challenges in his new appointment as leader. God needed to lift Joshua out of some personal ruts before he could become the leader the nation needed. Joshua needed to overcome some internal enemies before he could face the external enemies.

Personal proficiency precedes public power. If we don't win the battle within, we won't win the battle without. Joshua had to face three issues.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. Strained relationships.

- a. The same people whom Joshua was going to rely on to take the Promised Land were the sons and daughters of those who had resisted and rebelled against Moses (Exodus 16:1–3; 17:1–7; Numbers 11:1,2; 16:41–50). Perhaps Joshua had to deal with resentment

- and set aside those feelings.
- b. Each of us needs to deal with strained relationships. How can you restore them? Think of the people with whom you have a strained relationship. Write down their names and pray for grace to reconcile with these people.
2. **Disappointment that comes with past defeat (Numbers 13; 14).**
  - a. Forty years earlier Joshua had spied out the land and tried to persuade the people to take it. But the people refused. This disappointment may have affected Joshua.
  - b. Disappointment creates powerful feelings. We might feel defeated. If we want to move into the place of promise and victory, we need to overcome past failures or forgive those who opposed us. Think of one disappointment. Ask God to help you let go of the bitter memory.

#### 3. Confidence in your own ability.

- a. Joshua was the servant of Moses, a leader who was repeatedly challenged by the people. Moses had appointed Joshua to lead (Numbers 27:18–23). Everyone may not have agreed with his appointment. Joshua might easily have had an identity and confidence problem. But God reassured him, "Be strong and of good courage" (Joshua 1:6).
- b. Allow God's encouragement to Joshua to strengthen and challenge you to overcome fear and insecurity.

### CONCLUSION:

God wants to help you overcome the things that limit you so you can live in peace and productivity.

Remember, personal proficiency precedes public power. If you don't win the battle within, you won't win the battle without.

—Jay Herndon, Burlingame, California

# S E R M O N S E E D S

## HOW TO GIVE AWAY YOUR FAITH

John 4:5–26

### INTRODUCTION:

To be successful harvesters of the lost, we must begin by planting the gospel into the lives of people who are unsaved. One of the most practical and biblical ways we do this is through witnessing. As much as we realize our call to be a witness and understand the command to witness, we don't always successfully fulfill our call and obey the command.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. Witnessing involves all that we are and all that we do.

Witnessing goes far beyond what we say. There are three important truths to remember about being a witness that will help us fulfill our call and obey the command to be a witness.

- A personal relationship with Christ is a prerequisite.
- Witnessing involves our whole life.
- Involvement in evangelism is an essential vitamin for a growing experience with Christ and a vital Christian life.

#### 2. Seven principles for action.

- Contact others socially (verses 5–7).
  - People are not getting saved

- because non-Christians are not listening to our message.
- (2) The Holy Spirit can't save saints or seats.
- (3) If we don't interact with non-Christians, how can we introduce them to Christ?
- b. Establish a common interest (verses 7,8).
  - (1) By establishing a common interest we can build a bridge for communication.
  - (2) We must work positively and patiently to establish mutual interests with others beginning first with their interest, not ours.
  - (3) The voice any person likes to hear best is his/her own.
- c. Arouse curiosity (verses 9–15).
  - (1) By arousing curiosity, we lead people into a subject they may not normally talk about.
  - (2) By creating curiosity, we make the person we are witnessing to responsible for the content of the conversation.
- d. Don't go too far (verses 13–19).
  - (1) Give a person only as much of the message as he or she is ready for.
  - (2) By being casual and relaxed, the

person we are talking to will push for answers and we won't need to force our witness.

- Don't condemn (verses 13–19).
  - (1) People don't need condemnation. They know they are doing wrong.
  - (2) Compliment, don't condemn.
- f. Stick with the main issues (verses 20–24).
  - (1) Stay focused on your objective...to win them to Christ.
  - (2) Don't become distracted and get off target.
- g. Confront them directly (verses 25,26).
  - (1) We must bring people into a direct confrontation with Christ.
  - (2) People fall into one of two categories:
    - Those who lack the necessary information.
    - Those who know about Christ, but haven't decided.

### CONCLUSION:

These seven principles are important to successfully give away your faith. Once we grasp these principles and move out in faith, we will realize results in our witnessing.

—Randy Cartwright, Cape Girardeau, Missouri

## THE SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING

Leviticus 7:11–15

### INTRODUCTION:

Under the Levitical system, one of the peace offerings was a "sacrifice of thanksgiving." It expressed the offerer's gratitude for God's mercies. All the offerings indicated one action: worship. The fact a sacrifice of thanksgiving was included shows the importance of maintaining a spirit of praise and gratitude in our worship.

### MESSAGE:

#### 1. Thanksgiving for salvation.

- When we have enjoyed a benefit for a long time, there is a danger of taking it for granted. We can keep the wonder of our salvation alive in our hearts by daily thanksgiving.
- Our thanksgiving for salvation is

- intensified by recognizing we could not have saved ourselves (Ephesians 2:8,9).
- c. We should not dwell in our past sins, but recognizing our past state before we found Christ increases our gratitude to God (Colossians 1:12–14).
2. Thanksgiving for daily benefits.
  - As our Heavenly Father, God provides for all our needs after we are born into His family (Psalms 68:19; 103:1–5; 116:12,13).
  - God's care extends to the smallest details of our lives (Matthew 10:29–31).
  - God's benefits include the provision for our material necessities (Matthew 6:11,25–32).
3. Thanksgiving for our future hope.

- Once we were without hope (Ephesians 2:12), but the indwelling Christ makes future glory a present reality (Colossians 1:27).
- Jesus has made our heavenly home His personal promise (John 14:2,3).
- Jesus' return is such an inspiring hope that Paul calls it "blessed" (Titus 2:13).

### CONCLUSION:

We are often tempted to focus on trials, tests, and other unpleasant things. Keeping a spirit of thanksgiving helps us overcome trials and strengthens our faith.

—Kenneth D. Barney  
Springfield, Missouri  
Adapted from Advance.



### PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S LUNCHEON

Our women's ministries department hosts a professional women's luncheon each year. Since our regular women's ministries meetings are held on a weekday when most working women cannot attend, we wanted to expand our outreach and fellowship to professional women of the city. We reserve a banquet room at a convenient location and host a luncheon inviting women working in the government offices as well as other businesses downtown. Several of the women in our church work in this area, and they invite their friends and coworkers. This endeavor has been a success and appreciated by the professional women in our city.

—Terri Ward, Hamilton, Ohio

### PREPARE TO CELEBRATE

Churches often plan celebrations for anniversaries or other events. When our congregation planned our church's 125th anniversary, we learned that at least six areas need attention.

#### 1. Choose one person to lead the planning.

Even with many hands and minds to share in the preparations, somebody has to take responsibility for seeing that everything is done.

#### 2. Make the big decisions first.

Set dates and contact speakers before proceeding with other plans. We asked two of our former ministers to speak for the Sunday morning service. The chairmen wrote and gave them the tentative dates. The speakers had the dates marked on their calendars 1-1/2 years ahead of this celebration.

#### 3. Select committees and chairpersons.

List everything you need to cover, and plan committees accordingly. Try to have enough committees so no one has too many responsibilities. Choose people who are able and willing to serve.

#### 4. Start planning early.

The chairmen set up their committees and started meeting at least 9 months before the special day.

#### 5. Count the cost.

Each chairperson needs to make an estimate of the expenses for his/her part of the celebration.

Will you be paying your speakers? Even if they speak without a fee, consider travel, lodging, and meal expenses. Will

they fly or drive? Stay in motels or with church families? Spend one or more nights on the road? How many meals will they need? Will they bring their spouse or children?

Our program committee estimated the travel expenses for the speakers. We also invited two former ministers' wives and a former music director to come for special music. After making a reasonable estimate of each individual or family's travel expenses, the committee decided what our church could pay. They contacted the guests and explained the financial arrangements. Guests were also told what housing arrangements had been made for them.

Other costs to consider are: Will you serve meals? Will meals be potluck or catered? Will you ask for donations to cover catered meals? Are you giving souvenirs or offering some for a nominal cost? Include the cost of publicity, invitations, and decorations.

When you have all the estimated expenses, take them to your church board. If they are too high, the board may suggest looking for ways to economize.

#### 6. Plan special keepsakes.

Attractive plaques, picturing the original and present church buildings, were offered at a nominal cost.

One committee produced program/historical booklets. It was important for our members to know about our first congregation—that group of less than 12 people who met in the upper story of the courthouse in 1871. The pictorial booklets tell our history from the first one-room-and-belfry church to our present two-story building. They also relate the story of the grave on the church lawn where Josephine Parry and her children are buried.

An anniversary celebration is a happy occasion. But it is more than just a party—it is also a time to renew the vows made many years ago. In 1871, a few people held their first meetings in a rural Missouri courthouse and committed themselves to faithfully serve God in Lamar. We held an anniversary party 125 years later because we wanted to celebrate that commitment.

—LeAnn Campbell, Lamar, Missouri

### MISSIONS RE-MINDED

To build missions awareness in our congregation, we produce a bulletin insert each week to highlight one of the missionaries we support. On the insert, we provide information about the missionary, his or her place of ministry, and people they are serving. We also list population, demographic, and



general information about our missionary's country. We gather this information from encyclopedias or other resources. We include important events that have recently happened in a missionary's area that we learned about through newsletters or E-mail. We also list outreaches and events the missionary is planning. We include a picture of the missionary family so the congregation can see the people they are supporting.

We select an individual to present this information during our Sunday morning service. This person highlights the missions outreach and mentions ways to pray more effectively for the missionary and the people they are trying to reach.

This insert helps us develop a heart for the nations through awareness, prayer, and giving.

—Darryl Pigg, Tipp City, Ohio

## LIGHT-IT-UP RALLY

### Purpose

To prepare and encourage elementary students to be light-houses of prayer in their public schools during the school year.

### Background

As part of our citywide, interdenominational effort to reach our city for Christ, the children's pastors and leaders have mirrored an already existing coalition of senior pastors and parachurch leaders who have met regularly in our city for over 3 years. The children's pastors and leaders coalition is called KidNET. Our purpose is to reach the children of our city with the gospel.

The children's leaders who make up KidNET have a Light-It-Up rally to bring the church kids of our city together. The rally, featuring a Christian band, is hosted by a participating church and funded by the churches that make up KidNET.

### Details

The children's pastors purchase tickets and distribute them to their children. These \$5 tickets cover the cost of the concert, lighthouse materials, and a Light-It-Up T-shirt. Churches absorb most of the cost of these tickets.

The Harvest Evangelism Lighthouse materials are written in a kid-friendly manner and embrace the prayer, care, and share method of evangelism.

The concert lasts approximately 1-1/2 hours. Local children's pastors emcee the evening, bringing the lighthouse theme to life. At the end of the evening, the local children's pastors present simple lighthouse information, and each

children's pastor receives written information to distribute to his or her children. We culminate the evening with prayer for the children, prayer for boldness, and the challenge to stand for righteousness.

Children's pastors encourage their young people to wear their Light-It-Up T-shirts on a specific day each week or month to encourage other believers in their classroom and school.

—Cynthia L. Speckman, Omaha, Nebraska

## KIDS IMPACT TEAM

Kids Impact Team is a one-week training class. During the summer we take a small group of kids (4th–6th grades) and have a 3-hour training session for 5 days.

We train kids in puppetry, human videos, balloon sculpturing, creative witnessing techniques, and how to pray. We then have the kids use their newly learned skills in a children's outreach. One year the children ministered with an inner-city church.

Another year we used the kids at our own Kids Crusade. The kids enjoy the class, learn new ministry skills, and are given opportunity to minister to other kids in a tangible way.

—Jeff Miles, Issaquah, Washington

## CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

One of our favorite holiday services is our Christmas Around the World. We invite people from several different cultures in our church to prepare 10-minute segments to explain a Christmas custom from their homeland. They are also asked to dress in native costume and read the nativity story in their language. We have them sing seasonal songs as well. The congregation sings appropriate carols interspersed between these family presentations.

The purpose of this service is to explain how and why certain traditions exist. This also makes people from the various ethnic backgrounds feel loved and accepted. The service ends with a feeling of unity since all have come together for the same purpose—to worship the Christ of Christmas.

—Douglas R. Rose, Grand Prairie, Texas

## SEND US YOUR IDEAS

*Enrichment* will pay up to \$50 for each published account of a program idea. Send your ideas, along with a detailed description, to: Ministry Ideas, *Enrichment* Journal, 1445 Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894.

E-mail: You may send your ministry ideas to: [enrichmentjournal@ag.org](mailto:enrichmentjournal@ag.org).



### THE WIND BLOWS WHEREVER IT PLEASES

I was sitting on my deck looking out at the woods behind my home. After a time I became aware of the wind moving the tops of the tall trees, but none of the short growth closer to the house moved. The flowers and the grasses were still. And again I observed that sometimes these same flowers and grasses moved as a breeze came by, but the pines, oaks, and gum trees didn't seem to notice.

I thought, *Here is a picture of the Spirit moving among God's people. Sometimes at one level, touching some; other times at another level, touching others. And what the Spirit touches moves, sometimes with a flutter, sometimes with a great bowing over.*

Sometimes people are deeply moved and express it openly. At other times the Spirit causes deep inner reflection. But we know one thing: The Spirit moves where He will (John 3:8). We must allow the Spirit to move within us.

—J.J. Bentley, Philadelphia, Mississippi

### THANKFUL FOR UNUSUALNESS

Dr. Alexander Whyte of Edinburgh was famous for his pulpit prayers. He always found something to thank God for, even in bad times. One stormy morning, a member of his congregation thought to himself, *The preacher will have nothing to thank God for on a wretched morning like this.* But Whyte began his prayer, "We thank Thee, O God, that it is not always like this."

—Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations.  
*Used with permission.*

### TARNISHED COINS

We asked families to bring their change for a special mission offering. What a pile of change we received—too much for me to count. I went to a nearby grocery store that had an automatic coin counter and poured the change into the bin.

As the machine was counting, several coins were rejected. I picked them up to put them back in the bin but noticed each one was badly tarnished, bent, or had a nick in the edge. I waited for the process to finish, received my voucher and took the rejected ones from the return slot.

As I was walking through the parking lot, I felt the Lord speak, *Isn't it just like the world? Those people with a cut here or a gash there get passed over for others more presentable.* And I prayed that the church would never be like that coin counter.

I felt the Lord speak again, *Only the perfect coin made it through.* Jesus Christ was the only perfect coin, not rejected. First Peter 1:19 refers to the "precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (NIV).

You and I would be passed over. We're bent out of shape, crusted over with sins, and have nicks in the armor. But Jesus was perfect.

What happened to those coins that didn't make it through? I put them in the offering bag...and they counted this time.

—Submitted by Daniel Tayman, Howland, Ohio.

### SIMPLY CONTENT

The *Springfield (Mo.) News-Leader* and *USA Today* published a story about a woman named Birdle Mannon. Birdle was college-educated. A former teacher, she chose to live in her rustic, childhood cabin in the woods with no electricity, running water, or furnace.

When asked if she was happy with her living conditions, she replied, "I don't really bother my head about being happy or sad."

When asked about needing to move to a nursing home some day, her response was, "If I have to leave...it will be all right."

When she fell and hurt her hip, she was moved to an assisted-care facility. The move confused her, but she adjusted. Birdle's visitors included friends and those who had read about her life.

Birdle's contentment came from within. Her longtime friend said, "Her faith in God was overwhelming. She believed God would take care of her, and He did."

Birdle lived out the apostle Paul's teaching in Philippians 4:12: "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation" (NIV).

—Submitted by Diane Fulks, Springfield, Missouri.

### SHIPWRECKED COMPASSION

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of the *Titanic* disaster was not that so many lives were lost, but so few people were rescued. Of the 20 lifeboats lowered overboard, only 2 were filled to capacity. Several were half full. A few had but a handful of passengers in them. After the ship split in half and sunk, hundreds of people wearing life jackets floated in the open water near the 20 lifeboats. Only one of the little boats went back in search of survivors. The rest of them (with plenty of room) remained at a distance, grateful to be alive, while the others





died from hypothermia rather than from drowning.

Too often we behave like those in the half-full lifeboats. We've been saved from eternal judgment, and we're grateful for grace, but unmoved by the plight of those who are perishing around us. We have what they need, but are preoccupied with survival celebrations in the boat. In Philippians 2, Paul calls us to follow the example of Jesus, who left the security of His inheritance to seek and save the lost.

—Submitted by Greg Asimakoupoulos, Naperville, Illinois.

### A PLEA FOR SCRIPTURAL UNITY

Dr. Leslie B. Flynn relates the following historical incident.

"Just before the battle of Trafalgar in 1805, the British naval commander, Lord Nelson, learned that a captain and an admiral were at odds. He sent for the two men. Placing the right hands of the two men together, Lord Nelson said, pointing to the opposing navy, 'Look—over there is the enemy'."

On one hand, Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). But on the other hand, when John related to Jesus that they had seen one casting out devils in His name and had forbidden him, Jesus replied, "Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us" (Luke 9:50).

This is not a plea to tolerate evident heresy or apostasy, but rather that we not allow personal differences on nonessentials to divide us. The hour is late, and the enemy is both cruel and crafty (Ephesians 6:11,12; 1 Peter 5:8). He is adept at using the "divide, then conquer" strategy. And as Jesus said in yet another place, "And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Mark 3:25).

How tragic it is, when in the confusion of the battle, our soldiers are mistakenly shot by their fellow soldiers. We need to make sure we know who is the enemy.

—Submitted by Wallace E. Joice, Joplin, Missouri.

*Adapted from Dr. Leslie B. Flynn's, The Other Twelve.*

### JUST SAY "THANKS"

Jack Nicklaus, one of the most legendary golfers, is also legendary for expressing thanks. This gesture of expressing thanks began for Jack in the very early days of his career when he was too poor to stay in luxury hotels, and he stayed with people in their homes. He would write a special note of thanks expressing gratefulness for their hospitality. To this day, many of these people prize the notes he wrote to them. Then times and the fortunes of golf changed for him...he became a superstar in golf and business and he could afford

to stay anywhere he chose. But that didn't change his habit of expressing thanks. He still looks for ways in which to express his gratitude to those who have helped him.

Jesus Christ set the example for us to follow. As you read of Him through the Gospels, you note that He always gave thanks before He ate, expressed thanks to the Heavenly Father, and showed appreciation for any demonstration of love given to Him. One example is His thanks to the woman who anointed His head with expensive oil and who washed His feet with her tears. Gratitude—in life, in living, in business, in personal relationships; you just can't say "thank you" too often.

—Robert Strand, Springfield, Missouri. Adapted from Charting Your Journey (New Leaf Press, 1999). Used with permission.

### SONGS, HYMNS, AND SPIRITUAL SONGS

According to advertising guru Roy Williams, music enhances our experience of life. "Using magnetic-resonance imaging to peek into the inner workings of the human brain, Harvard Medical School recently published a study indicating that certain parts of the brains of musicians grow an average of 7 percent larger than their nonmusical peers.

"In a simultaneous but unrelated study, researchers from the University of California found that second-graders who took piano lessons scored an average of 27 percent higher on math skills than their nonmusical friends. Students who were given the most intensive type of music training (the Kodaly method) had the highest math scores of all.

"Prior to these announcements, the fact Mozart often scribbled algebraic equations alongside his musical compositions was considered only as irrelevant historical trivia. Now scientists are adding two plus two and finding middle C."

If music elevates our ability to transcend the routines of daily living, no wonder the apostle Paul celebrates the importance of music in the lives of believers. In both Ephesians and Colossians, Paul identifies singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as essential ingredients in corporate worship.

—Submitted by Greg Asimakoupoulos, Naperville, Illinois.

### SEND US YOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

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E-mail: You may send your ministry ideas to: [enrichmentjournal@ag.org](mailto:enrichmentjournal@ag.org).



# book reviews



## TREASURED MEMORIES

Yvonne L. Carlson (21st Century Press, 328 pp., paperback, \$11.95)

"I know that all of the missionary heroes are not in the history books, because I know where many of them still live." I have frequently made this comment in missionary services across America. Many missionary stories have simply never been told. Those who are living those epic experiences for Christ's sake are so full of joy at being servants of the Most High God that their own discomforts and sacrifices seem insignificant. It simply does not occur to them that the body of Christ would be blessed by their missionary experiences.

In reading Yvonne Carlson's *Treasured Memories*, it was evident that the Orville Carlson family are quiet, humble servants of the Lord. You will discover, as I did, that her true motivation is to give thanks and praise to our merciful Father. He is the one who called them and led them to His perfect ways.

The Carlsons have known the anguish of deep waters and dark, uncertain times, but special miracles of mercy have followed them and kept

them alive and busy for God. They are real-life heroes in their personal obedience to the Great Commission. I salute them and recommend the prayerful reading of *Treasured Memories*.

—Reviewed by Loren Triplett, former director, Assemblies of God Foreign Missions, Springfield, Missouri.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT: A PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE

Anthony D. Palma (Logion Press, hardcover, 295 pages, \$26.99)

Veteran Assemblies of God educator, Anthony Palma, has distilled a lifetime of study in a handbook on the Holy Spirit. Writing in an easy-to-read style, Palma organizes the book into three



parts. Part 1 is General Pneumatology, spelling out the basics of a biblical theology of the Spirit. Part 2, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, updates the case for a baptism in the Spirit separate from conversion and evidenced by speaking with other tongues. Part 3, Spiritual Gifts, articulates an understanding of spiritual gifts, including gifts of leadership and practical assistance, as well as the traditionally recognized nine gifts in 1 Corinthians 12.

This book interacts with both classic

and modern scholarship, and yet presents a carefully reasoned and biblically satisfying defense of classic Pentecostal belief. Palma also lays the groundwork for an understanding of spiritual gifts that energizes the ministry, not just of the clergy, but of every believer in the church.

The book features full subject and scriptural indexes, ample footnotes, and rich bibliographies. It will encourage further research and become a standard classroom text; it will also be a valuable source of sermon and Bible study material. This book is a must for every pastor and student.

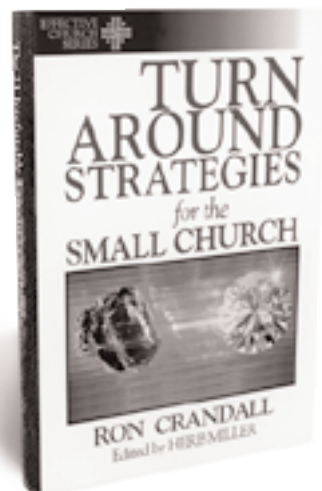
—Reviewed by Edgar R. Lee, S.T.D., vice president for academic affairs, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri.

## TURNAROUND STRATEGIES FOR THE SMALL CHURCH

Ron Crandall (Abingdon Press, 176 pp., paperback, \$16)

Ron Crandall captures the heart of what it takes to revive a small church. While not Pentecostal, Crandall has an obvious appreciation for dependence on the Holy Spirit.

The centrality and importance of



leadership are clearly stressed throughout the seven chapters and appendix. The author discovered an insightful perspective from members of churches experiencing turnaround. The members ranked their pastors' assets and strengths (in order of importance): loving people, people skills, preaching, visionary and motivator, personal faith, and love of God. This list was similar to the perspective of turnaround leaders, thus lending further credence to the value of this edition.

*Turnaround* could serve as a handbook for first-level revitalization of a small church. It contains a useful mix of philosophy and practical application. The author conscientiously offers workable, practical examples to help those involved in revitalization. It is filled with well-researched lists of effective personal behaviors, things to do, and strategies to implement. Crandall's background as an academician and a denominational leader shine through, especially in Appendix A.

A core concern he addresses is the partnership role educational institutions and district offices can play in better training and assisting ministers willing to tackle the task of turning around a near-death church.

This short, thoroughly researched work from Abingdon's Effective Church Series is well worth reading.

—Reviewed by Terry L. Yancey, Kansas district superintendent, Wichita, Kansas.

### THE SMALL MEMBERSHIP CHURCH

Lyle E. Schaller (Abingdon Press, 142 pp., paperback, \$13)

This book is organized around three theses. First, for nearly 4 centuries, the small congregation has been the dominant institutional expression of Protestant Christianity in North America. Second, the societal context for the small Protestant church has changed from supportive to neutral, to, in many places, a hostile environment. Third, small churches have a bright and promising future if they

adapt to a new role in a changing culture.

The author gives a number of assumptions on which these three theses are based. He begins by showing the contrast between the larger and smaller church. Using his research of all major denominations, he presents extensive numerical facts to explain why, which, and where churches are small.

Schaller discusses whether small churches should compete or cooperate with their competition. He argues that



small churches should adopt a niche strategy to compete with megachurches.

The author states that the easiest path into the 21st century is to avoid making decisions and simply drift along. Most small congregations have many more options open to them than they think. Schaller suggests alternative scenarios that can lead to better use of resources and more focused energies in ministry.

This book is informative and useful to the small-church pastor and congregation that want to change by finding their niche and making a difference in the new millennium.

—Reviewed by Mike Carl, senior pastor, Shores Fellowship Church, Ocean Shores, Washington.

### SMALL, STRONG CONGREGATIONS

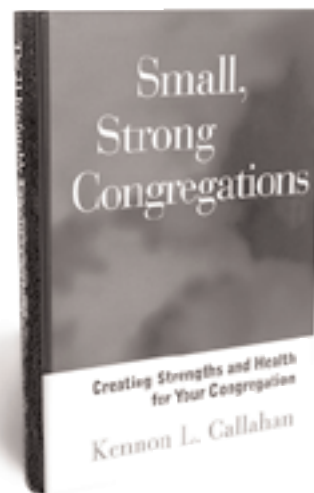
Kennon L. Callahan (Jossey-Bass, 342 pp., hardcover, \$22)

*Small* is one word we avoid when referring to church growth. Size, however, is not the factor that qualifies a church for effective ministry. Churches of every size can apply the principles needed to be effective in ministry to their communities.

Callahan cites numerous examples to help the reader discover the underlying strengths of a church family that need to be developed. He makes it clear that the focus of church development needs to be on the strengths, rather than the size of a congregation.

The development of disciples worldwide depends heavily on small, strong congregations. The recent upsurge of church-growth books and seminars focuses primarily on the large, regional dynamics of American churches. The solution for small congregations is to discover and develop their own unique mission and strengths rather than becoming a "mini" large church.

Callahan explores eight specific areas that are vital to strong churches, regardless of size. It is not realistic for a church to be strong in all eight areas. A



church, however, that intentionally develops in five of the eight areas can become a strong, healthy church.

In this book, church leaders will discover practical insights and inspiration that can be applied in their setting, regardless of size or locality.

—Reviewed by Daniel L. Zitterkopf, pastor, Bayard Assembly of God, Bayard, Nebraska.



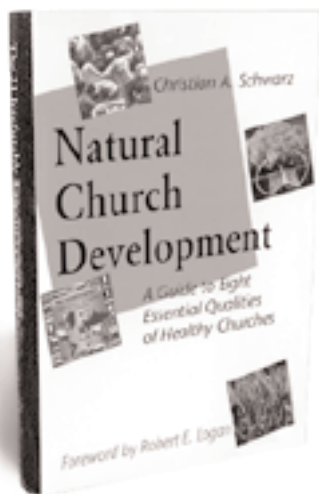


# book reviews

## NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT: A GUIDE TO EIGHT QUALITIES OF HEALTHY CHURCHES

Christian A. Schwarz (ChurchSmart Resources, 128 pp., hardcover, \$19.95)

*Natural Church Development* is an essential resource for every church willing to critically look at its current state of health. Christian Schwarz gathered church health information from 1,000 churches in 32 countries on 6 continents, resulting in 4.2 million items of data. His findings indicate that all growing churches have the same eight characteristics regardless of location and culture. These eight characteristics should be the strategic goals of every church.



Schwarz emphasizes principles of church health and growth, not a model to be imposed on the local church. He describes six “biotic” or living organism principles of church growth rather than a “robot” duplication model of machine logic.

The author says the health and growth of the church are similar to that of the biological development of a living organism; church growth is the natural result of a healthy church.

With these principles, any church of any size can apply them and anticipate positive results.

*Natural Church Development* is an excellent resource book. The supporting self-evaluation tool is available from Church Smart Resources of Carol Stream, Illinois. This book would be most helpful in obtaining an objective view of the local church’s effectiveness.

—Reviewed by Gary R. Allen, D.Min.,  
executive editor of *Enrichment Journal*  
and national coordinator of the  
Ministerial Enrichment Office,  
Springfield, Missouri.

## LEADING WITH INTEGRITY

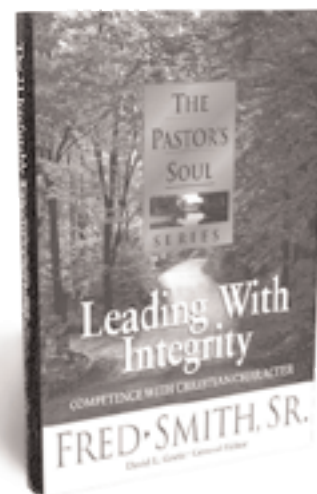
Fred Smith (Bethany House Publishers, 175 pp., hardcover, \$16.99)

Do you wish you had an elder statesman who would speak the truth to you? Here are some statements from *Leading With Integrity*:

- The key indicator of our integrity as a person is self-respect.
- A humility that is still talkative does not run very deep.
- The knowledge of God comes through obedience, not learning.
- The number one responsibility of top management is to define reality.
- Discernment is not given to us so we can criticize, but so we can coach; it is not given to us to point out weakness, but to help build up strength and to avoid error.

For many years, some of the finest leaders in the church have sought out Fred Smith for the opportunity to hear the wisdom of God spoken into their lives.

The book is divided into two major parts: *Becoming a Whole Person* deals with issues of character, call, and integrity. *Developing Your Skills* focuses



on mandate, discernment, giving, mentoring, and competence. The book concludes with over 70 of Smith’s most pithy statements on life and leadership.

Here is a book to savor—to muse over bit by bit—and to allow God to use to sharpen your leadership gifts. This is good stuff—much needed in a frenetic, inch-deep world.

—Reviewed by David Argue, senior pastor, Christ’s Place, Lincoln, Nebraska.

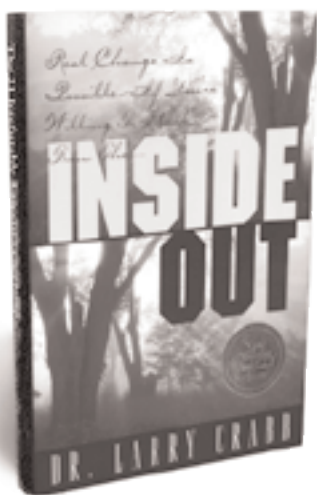
## INSIDE OUT

Larry Crabb (NavPress, 225pp., paperback, \$14)

Anyone can change quickly, but to make lasting and deep changes, one must change from the inside out. This is the thesis of Crabb’s classic book.

Larry Crabb is a well-known and highly respected voice in Christian counseling. His revised and updated *Inside Out* is worthy of a fresh reading. Crabb is founder and director of the Institute of Biblical Community and teaches in the graduate counseling program at Colorado Christian University in Denver, Colorado.

Among the impressive things in Crabb’s writing is the sense of



communicating at a deep and personal level as one who is sharing his personal growth. With honesty and transparency, Crabb describes his own spiritual journey. The book is illustrated with diagrams which amplify the lessons.

Crabb describes in detail three types of change: change in conscious direction, change in approach to relationships, and change in direction of being. He contends that lasting change requires growth in the Holy Spirit and practical applications of scriptural principles.

*Inside Out* is ideal for small group study, personal growth, and lay-counselor training.

—Reviewed by Donald A. Lichi, Ph.D.,  
executive vice president, EMERGE  
Ministries, Inc., Akron, Ohio.

## HOW TO CHANGE YOUR CHURCH (WITHOUT KILLING IT)

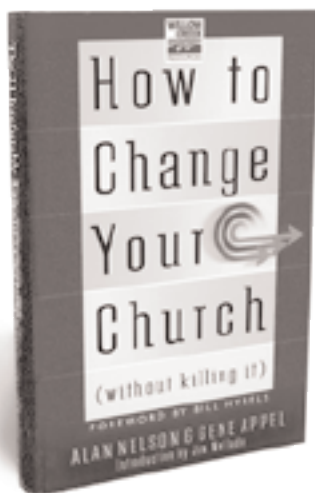
Alan Nelson and Gene Appel (Word  
Publishing Company, 354 pp.,  
hardcover, \$21.99)

The authors, who are pastors of growing churches, begin with the premise that change is inevitable, growth is optional. Change takes place everywhere, at all times. Change occurs in the church when it alters its methodology to stay current with an ever-changing society. Change also occurs when a church remains the same, because it becomes increasingly out-of-touch with an evolving community. Many churches fall in love with their

methods at the expense of their purpose.

This how-to book is a practical workbook designed to help leaders identify methods and ministries in the church that are in need of change, and incorporate change in such a way that the church remains intact and on course.

The book leans toward the seeker-sensitive philosophy of church growth. In some ways it seems to picture the church as the subject of change rather than the agent of change in society. It also appears that the authors are attempting to move the church from the traditional box to the contemporary box. Change has taken place, but the church has simply exchanged one box for the other.



In spite of this, the astute reader will glean helpful insights and practical tools that will assist in guiding the church through needed change and toward continued growth.

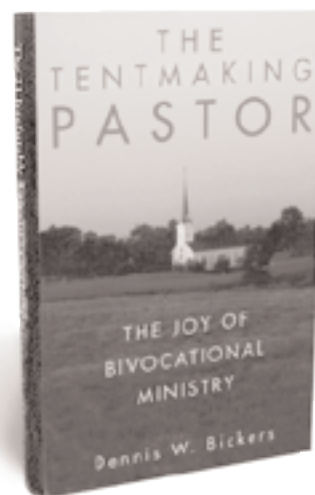
—Reviewed by Todd Weston, pastor,  
First Assembly of God, Manhattan,  
Kansas.

## THE TENTMAKING PASTOR

Dennis W. Bickers (Baker Book House,  
136 pp., paperback, \$13.99)

*The Tentmaking Pastor* addresses a role that has been around for some time but has not been properly explored—the bivocational pastor.

Church observers see this role as a growing trend in the 21st century.



According to some, churches that have attendance as high as 200 will not be able to provide a livable wage for their pastor and still support people ministries. The need for bivocational pastors will continue to grow.

Bickers addresses this topic with a wealth of experience and knowledge. For over 18 years, he has successfully blended pastoring a smaller church while being employed as a full-time factory worker. Later he ran a family business.

Each of the nine chapters addresses a unique aspect of bivocational ministry. The positives as well as the negatives are openly and honestly addressed and evaluated. Topics include the need for this ministry, advantages to the pastor and the church, how to balance both positions, and how to maintain one's personal and family life.

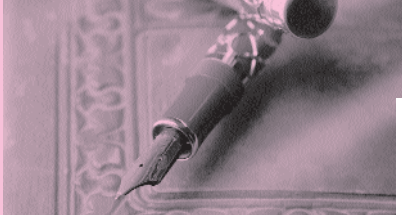
The author has a unique way of making bivocational pastoring exciting and rewarding. He makes the bivocational pastor feel honored to be called to this ministry.

—Reviewed by Larry Thomas, executive pastor, Abundant Life Assembly of God, Grapevine, Texas.

## A SERVICE

*Enrichment* reviews books we feel our readers would like to know about. These books are not always in accord with our point of view, and the reviews do not constitute a recommendation of the books. As a service to readers the Gospel Publishing House will supply any of these books, but books cannot be returned for credit.





# news & resources

## HOLY SPIRIT VOLUME THIRD IN PE BOOKS SERIES

The third volume in the successful line of Pentecostal Evangel Books, *Questions and Answers About the Holy Spirit*, was released in the spring by Gospel Publishing House.

"This is our most exciting book project yet," *Pentecostal Evangel* Managing Editor Ken Horn says. "The Holy Spirit is what the *Pentecostal Evangel* is all about. Powerful teaching, exhortation, and even Pentecostal history are included in these pages, from some of the giants of faith of the past: Ralph Riggs, G. Raymond Carlson, and C.M. Ward. Also included are leaders of today such as Robert Brandt, Richard Dresselhaus, and T. Ray Rachels. Some 30 chapters are packed with teaching and encouragement on the Comforter and His role in our lives."

*Questions and Answers About the Holy Spirit* has three sections: history, doctrine, and practice. The doctrine section covers such topics as the Holy Spirit's purpose, function, gifts, and power. The Holy Spirit in daily life is the thrust of the practice section. An overview of the birth of the Pentecostal movement and the Assemblies of God comprises the history section.

The initial press runs of the first two PE Books, *Strategies for Victorious Christian Living* and *Family: How To Have a Healthy Christian Home*, sold out.

## SALVATION REPORTS SURPASS 1,700 FOR FOURTH YEAR

For the fourth consecutive year, the *Pentecostal Evangel* received more than 1,700 responses from readers who made first-time commitments to Jesus Christ during 2000. The *Evangel* has regularly published a salvation coupon (except in *Missions World Editions*) since Jan. 1997.

During that time, about 7,000 people have notified the magazine of their decision to accept Christ. The total does not include *Evangel* readers who called the Assemblies of God 1-800-4PRAYER or a local church and reported their conversion experiences.

The coupons give readers a way to respond to the ABCs of Salvation in the *Evangel*. Those reporting their salvation experiences receive a copy of *Rock Solid—Building Your Relationship With Jesus*, and their names are forwarded to Assemblies of God churches for follow-up.

## GROWTH CONTINUES FOR SPANISH EVANGEL

Well into its second year as a subscriber-driven publication, *Evangelio Pentecostal* continues to climb in circulation. Entering 2001, the Spanish-language quarterly edition of the *Pentecostal Evangel* was being sent to hundreds of churches and individuals in the United States and around the world.

Among the nations represented by *Evangelio Pentecostal* subscribers are Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, France, Japan, and Mexico.

For just 25 cents per copy, a church or ministry within the United States can receive a bundle of 25 or more copies. A minimum bundle subscription of 25 copies to a U.S. address annually costs \$25. International bundle subscriptions of 25 or more copies are 50 cents per copy. *Evangelio Pentecostal* orders are handled by GPH Customer Services at 1-800-641-4310.

## KEY BEARERS DONATIONS HIT RECORD LEVELS

Each week, approximately 11,000 copies of the *Pentecostal Evangel* are sent to 500-plus correctional institutions across the United States. This is possible because of

the Key Bearers fund, a project administered by Light for the Lost. Last year, more than \$120,000 was raised through Key Bearers to underwrite the costs of this vital prison ministry. Typically, several inmates read a copy of the *Pentecostal Evangel* or the Spanish-language *Evangelio Pentecostal*. The *Evangel* receives hundreds of reports annually from inmates who've committed their lives to Jesus Christ after reading the publication.

"It's encouraging to see how many Christians have a burden for those who are incarcerated and in need of Jesus Christ. These folks care enough to give," says *Pentecostal Evangel* Editor Hal Donaldson. "The people who attend Assemblies of God churches have demonstrated they have not forgotten the inmate population."

"There's nothing better than seeing souls saved—this program is doing that," adds Managing Editor Ken Horn. "There is perhaps no more effective place for the *Pentecostal Evangel* than in prisons."

Churches and individuals wanting to help provide the *Pentecostal Evangel* and *Evangelio Pentecostal* to inmates are encouraged to contact Light for the Lost for further information. Every dollar sponsors at least four copies of the publications. Donations or pledges can be made by calling 1-800-988-0292.

## 2001 NATIONAL MISSIONETTES WEEK IS SEPT. 9-15

As of 2001, National Missionettes Week begins with the second Sunday of September. Now your church can emphasize Missionettes at the beginning of the Missionettes year as girls are promoted to their new clubs.

The 2001 theme, "Got Jesus?" is supported by Psalm 37:23, "The steps of the godly are directed by the Lord. He delights in every detail of their lives" (*New*

*Living Translation*). The desire of the Missionettes office is for all Missionettes to understand the importance of knowing Jesus and of trusting God to direct their steps. Girls need to know that God delights in every detail of their lives.

If your church has not received the Missionettes Week theme packet, call the national Missionettes office. The packet contains promotional plans and materials, a Sleepover planning guide, and the new Missionettes catalog.

*Club Connection* magazine is part of the national ministry to encourage girls in their commitment to Christ and to have fun living for Him. A promotional flyer and order form for *Club Connection* is included in the packet mailed to local Missionettes coordinators.

The annual National Missionettes Week offering, received during local Missionettes Week services, helps the national office cover administration costs and provide services to more than 200,000 girls and sponsors involved in the Assemblies of God Missionettes program.

### **2001 NATIONWIDE MISSIONETTES SLEEPOVER**

The annual Nationwide Missionettes Sleepover is Sept. 21,22, 2001. This year's theme is "Siesta Fiesta." Kick off your church's Missionettes program with a Mexican flair. All Coins for Kids offerings will support Spanish translation of the Missionettes material.

Every church reporting a Missionettes ministry on the Annual Church Ministries Report will receive a combination Annual Theme/Sleepover Packet. If you have not yet received your packet, call 417-862-2781, ext. 4074, to request free planning materials.

### **LIGHT FOR THE LOST NATIONAL CONVENTION, APRIL 26,27, 2002**

The Light for the Lost National Convention will be in Springfield, Mo., in 2002. If you want Christian fellowship and reports of what God is doing with evangelism literature around the world, attend the 49th annual convention.

The convention will be held on April

26,27, at the Holiday Inn–University Plaza Convention Center. A golf tournament will precede the convention.

To reserve your room, contact:

Holiday Inn–University Plaza  
333 John Q. Hammons Parkway  
Springfield, MO 65802  
(417) 864-7333

For more information, contact LFTL at 1-800-988-0292.

### **LIGHT FOR THE LOST WEB SITE**

Sometimes by the time your congregation and councilmen receive the recent Light for the Lost update, it is old news.

Light for the Lost is now on the Web. Log on to [www.lftl.ag.org](http://www.lftl.ag.org) and check out the wealth of information. With just the click of a button, you and your church can find out what God is doing with evangelism literature around the world, check out the recent *Spotlight* articles, or stay informed on convention updates.

Speed up the ordering process by ordering LFTL promotional materials online with our new order form. Meet financial needs faster by sending faith promises, special offerings, and even councilmen dues through the contributions page.

### **HOME MISSIONARIES' CHRISTMAS GIFT, OCT. 28**

Assemblies of God Home Missions sets aside a day in October for home missionaries Christmas offering. A gift of money for Christmas is a blessing for your home missionaries, but it means much more.

Home missionaries minister in inner cities, where murders and drugs are common; on reservations, where suicide, drugs, and poverty are prevalent; in Teen Challenge centers, where addicted men and women come as a final hope; and in dozens of other hard places.

When you take your home missionaries Christmas offering, you're telling home missionaries, "We remember you; we care about you; we appreciate you; we're proud of you."

On Sunday, Oct. 28, receive a Christmas offering and pray for your Assemblies of God home missionaries.

### **VETERANS DAY IS NOV. 11**

For many veterans, this Nov. 11 will be their last Veterans Day. According to recent statistics, World War II veterans are dying at a rate of 1,000 per day. Veterans from the Korean War are not too far behind.

Paul said, "Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe...respect, then respect; if honor, then honor" (Romans 13:7, NIV). Men and women who have served in the military have placed their lives on the line for you and your congregation. The loss of 17 sailors along with the many seriously wounded aboard the *USS Cole* in Yemen, in Oct. 2000, is a grim reminder of the supreme sacrifice that each veteran was willing to make.

This Nov. 11, give your congregation an opportunity to show its respect and appreciation by honoring your veterans.

### **FALL BOOTCAMPS**

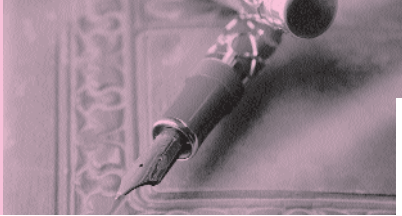
The Assemblies of God Church Planting Department has scheduled three Church Planting BootCamps for fall 2001. According to Church Planting Director Paul Drost, the first camp will be Sept. 10–13, 2001, and will be hosted by the Rocky Mountain District at the Hermit Basin Conference Center in Westcliffe, Colo.

The second camp will be hosted by the Wisconsin/Northern Michigan District, Sept. 24–27, 2001, at the Spencer Lake Christian Center in Waupaca, Wis.

The Appalachian District will host the third BootCamp, Oct. 22–24, 2001, at the Appalachian District Conference Center in Ghent, W.Va.

"Church Planting BootCamps are changing the way we plant churches," Drost says. "Now men and women are going out prepared to meet the challenges—armed with understanding, knowledge, a clear vision, and an experienced mentor only a phone call away."

For more information, or to find out how you can register for any of these BootCamps, contact the Church Planting Department at 417-862-2781, ext. 3252.



# news & resources

## **NATIONAL RV CONVENTIONS IN 2001**

Mission America Placement Services will host two national RV conventions during 2001. The 5-day conventions, which are open to the public, will be held Sept. 30–Oct. 4 in Carlinville, Ill., and Oct. 21–25 in Palm Desert, Calif.

Both conventions provide prospective RV Volunteers an opportunity to learn about the ministry. Highlights include construction seminars, women's sessions, worship services, and a presentation of projects throughout America, including Alaska and Hawaii, and the protectorates of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

As RV Volunteers seek God's will at these conventions concerning where He wants them to serve and use their skills, they also see friends and renew acquaintances from past projects.

If you would like to become an RV Volunteer or want to know more about 2001 conventions, call 417-862-2781, ext. 1385 for more information.

## **NATIONAL PRISON DAY IS SEPT. 16**

Malcolm X became a Muslim while in prison. His influence in the Muslim community is still felt today, years after his death. What kind of influence would this articulate man have had if he had been reached for Jesus Christ?

Is anyone reaching prisoners for Christ? Yes. Currently, the Assemblies of God has 89 correctional chaplains preaching the good news. Prison chaplains enter another world when they walk through prison doors. The environment has its own social structure and language. It takes dedication and faith for chaplains to win prisoners' trust as they pour out their lives to bring them to Christ.

Sunday, Sept. 16, is National Prison Day. On this day, please let Assemblies

of God prison chaplains know you appreciate their dedication by praying for them and taking a special offering.

To learn more about prison ministry, contact the Chaplaincy Department at 417-862-2781, ext. 3260.

## **CHI ALPHA DAY IS SEPT. 30**

Consider the American campus:

- Fifteen million Americans are enrolled in college and 90 million Americans have completed a college degree.
- Forty-five percent of all college students are binge drinkers.
- One out of eight women on campus reports being the victim of sexual assault.
- Ninety-five percent of Assemblies of God youth will attend a secular college.
- One-half million international students attended U.S. colleges and universities in 1999; many from countries closed to traditional missions.
- Chi Alpha Campus Ministries is transforming the campus with:
  - 301 full-time campus missionaries and leaders.
  - 206 campuses with evangelism and discipleship ministries.
  - 11 regional campus missions training centers.
  - 135 International Student Friendship Ministries.

Chi Alpha is dedicated to reaching students who may never otherwise hear the gospel of Christ, as well as ministering and equipping Christian students who want to serve Christ on their mission field—the university or college campus. Chi Alpha is a place for students to be a part of a community of believers. Students gather in weekly worship meetings on campus, participate in small-group discipleship outreaches, meet with campus missionaries

and their respected peers for one-on-one discipleship, and learn to be living disciples of Jesus Christ in the secular university.

Chi Alpha is committed to discipling students and helping them discover God's unique plan for their lives. More resources are needed to reach and disciple students for Christ. That's why Chi Alpha Campus Ministries asks you to take a special offering on Chi Alpha Day, Sunday, Sept. 30. Together we can "Reconcile Students to Christ—Transforming the University, the Marketplace, and the World."

To learn more about Chi Alpha, call 417-862-2781, ext. 1425.

## **GO TO CHURCH OR GO TO JAIL TEEN CHALLENGE DAY IS DEC. 2**

Did you know there's a government program that forces drug addicts to either go to church or be sent to prison? It's true. It's called the U.S. Court System. And when the court system has access and the center has room, drug addicts and alcohol abusers are given a choice: prison or Teen Challenge. Imagine, the court sentencing people to meet Christ.

Teen Challenge is one of the greatest success stories of the 20th century. At least 7 out of every 10 young people, men, and women who enter Teen Challenge overcome drug and alcohol addiction through Christ.

You can help turn lives around by partnering with Teen Challenge. Sunday, Dec. 2, is National Teen Challenge Day. The financial needs of Teen Challenge are great. Expansion is needed at every level. On this Sunday, pray for Teen Challenge and challenge your congregation to become regular, prayerful, and financial supporters of this ministry.

Learn more about Teen Challenge by

calling 417-862-6969, or contacting Teen Challenge International, USA, at: tcusa@teenchallengeusa.com.

### **SPENCE APPOINTED COMMISSIONER OF CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Robert H. Spence, D.D., has been appointed Assemblies of God commissioner of Christian Higher Education. The Executive Presbytery named Spence to succeed Wayne Kraiss, chancellor of Vanguard University (Costa Mesa, Calif.). Kraiss retired as Vanguard's president in May 2000, and served as commissioner of Christian Higher Education until Jan. 1, 2001. Spence continues to serve as president of Evangel University (Springfield, Mo.), a post he has filled since 1974.

As commissioner, Spence will chair the Commission on Christian Higher Education and represent Assemblies of God Christian Higher Education to the Fellowship. The Commission currently endorses 20 colleges, universities, seminary, and institutes of the Assemblies of God. The Commission sets standards for the schools that are evaluated through regular on-site campus visits. The Commission publishes the *Assemblies of God College Guide* and sponsors conferences for Christian higher education.

An Assemblies of God minister, Spence served as a pastor in Alabama for 20 years prior to assuming the presidency at Evangel. He has served on the General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God, the Commission on Christian Higher Education, the Assemblies of God Chaplains Commission, and the Board of Directors of Maranatha Village. He is also active in civic and community affairs in Springfield.

Spence holds B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Alabama and a Doctor of Divinity degree from Southeastern College of the Assemblies of God.

Robert and Anne Spence have three married sons, all graduates of Evangel, and three grandsons.

### **BENEVOLENCES HARVEST FESTIVALS ANNOUNCED**

Hillcrest Children's Home cares for boys and girls who cannot live at home because of abuse, neglect, or other reasons. The home's annual Harvest Festival will be Friday and Saturday, Oct. 5, 6, 2001.

Highlands Child Placement Services, the pro-life ministry of the Assemblies of God with its maternity home and adoption agency, will host its Harvest Festival on Friday, Oct. 19.

Your church can get involved:

1. Inform your church families about these ministries. If there are children in your church or neighborhood who need a temporary or permanent place to live, or an unmarried, pregnant young woman looking for direction, Hillcrest and Highlands may be able to help.

2. Give an offering or purchase items from their needs lists.

Harvest Festival needs lists are available by calling the Benevolences Department at 417-862-2781, ext. 2184, or by visiting their Web site at: [www.benevolences.ag.org](http://www.benevolences.ag.org)

### **AMA SUNDAY IS NOVEMBER 11**

Nearly 500 retired or disabled Assemblies of God ministers and spouses are receiving financial aid from Aged Ministers Assistance.

Sunday, Nov. 11, is AMA Day. This day gives an opportunity for churches and ministers to express their appreciation to our pioneer preachers for their sacrificial efforts in the early years of the Assemblies of God.

Free bulletin inserts are available by calling the Benevolences Department at 417-862-2781, ext. 2184. Offerings can be sent to the Benevolences Department, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894.

### **BENSON NAMED PRESIDENT OF CENTRAL BIBLE COLLEGE**

M. Wayne Benson, longtime pastor of First Assembly of God, Grand Rapids, Mich., and the executive presbyter from the Great Lakes Region for the

Assemblies of God, has been elected president of Central Bible College, Springfield, Mo., according to General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask. His appointment is effective May 31, 2001, and will continue through May 31, 2004. Benson succeeds the H. Maurice Lednicky who has served the college as president for 21 years and chose to relinquish that position for other ministry.

Benson has served various ministry posts including evangelist, youth pastor, and senior pastor since 1964. In addition, he has been one of the church's 17 executive presbyters since 1996 and serves on many of its committees and boards. He holds a B.A. in education from the University of Michigan. Under his leadership, First Assembly of God in Grand Rapids became one of the Fellowship's leading churches.

Benson and his wife, Kathy, have a grown son and daughter.

Central Bible College is one of 20 endorsed colleges of the Assemblies of God.

### **ENRICHMENT JOURNAL RECEIVES TOP EPA AWARD**

*Enrichment* journal won the 2000 Award of Excellence in the denominational category at the annual Evangelical Press Association meeting held in San Diego, Calif., May 6-9, 2001. The judges wrote, "The quality of writing, the seriousness of the approach, and the editorial decision to devote whole issues to a single subject is highly commendable. The magazine really reaches its intended audience. The intellectual content makes it suitable for a wider cross-section of evangelical pastors."

EPA is a religious and educational nonprofit corporation that seeks to promote the cause of evangelical Christianity and to enhance the influence of Christian journalism. EPA embraces some 375 periodicals, organizations, and individual members. Its publications have a combined circulation of some 19 million readers.







# With Christ

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Gering, Nebraska

**Jack S. Ameperosa**  
Stockton, California

**Morris R. Barrons**  
Fair Oaks, California

**G.H. Blair**  
Marianna, Florida

**Charles N.K. Blake**  
Koloa, Hawaii

**Nicolas Bonilla (Ramirez)**  
Camuy, Puerto Rico

**John Brown**  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

**Herbert Bruhn**  
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**Harry L. Elder, Jr.**  
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Mission, Texas

**Pedro Garcia**  
Chicago, Illinois

**Troy E. Gibbs**  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

**Bracy I. Greer**  
Corona, California

**Francis F. Gregg**  
Chula Vista, California

**Norman L. Hall**  
Coeur D'Alene, Idaho

**Lawrence R. Hampton**  
North Little Rock, Arkansas

**William C. Harper**  
Falling Waters, West Virginia

**Eva L. Harris**  
Pittsburg, Oklahoma

**Leon Hill**  
Caulfield, Missouri

**Ervin Hillard, Jr.**  
Harrah, Oklahoma

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Sun City, Arizona

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Springfield, Missouri

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Beaumont, Texas

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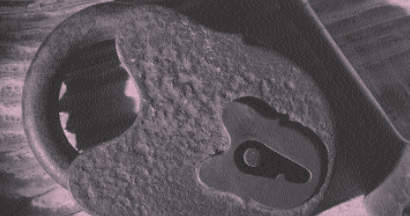
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# in closing

BY ARDEN K. ADAMSON



## Smaller Churches

**T**hank God for the smaller church—not because it's smaller, but because of the impact it can make for Christ. The contribution to the kingdom of God and the Assemblies of God cannot be overstated.

Just about every church was small at one time. Few were started with several hundred in attendance. The smaller church is a vital part of the kingdom of God; it is a soul-saving station. Many people who have been saved in smaller churches now worship in larger churches. Also, many who are in full-time ministry today came from smaller churches. While its members may move away or die, the smaller church is building the kingdom of God.

Because they offer fewer programs, many smaller churches feel they cannot compete with larger churches. But this is not a biblical perspective. This sense of competition is caused by mutually trying to attract people who are already looking for a church. The Great Commission commands us to focus on meeting people's needs and reaching people with Christ's message of hope. The smaller church can do this anytime, anywhere.

In recent years, our district has focused on planting new churches. We are also increasing our focus on developing a strong ministry to churches needing revitalization. Some churches remain smaller because they are unwilling to objectively examine themselves and make appropriate changes. Some have controlling individuals or families who, while well

intentioned, object to new ideas and it is difficult for them to accept change. Therefore, change is very slow or even nonexistent. Their facilities may also be less desirable, and they have fewer workers for ministry.

What can we do? One option is to do nothing, but this is unacceptable. God calls us to a higher level of stewardship. There are several areas in which the smaller church is on par with the larger, growing congregation. They have the same growth potential as the larger church. I pastored a smaller church that grew while in the shadow of a larger Pentecostal church.

Here are things the smaller church can do to be effective:

**Give what you have.** Whatever a smaller church can do for Christ, there are people nearby who will respond. While some may not be attracted to the smaller church because it lacks programs, there are people in a community to whom a smaller congregation can minister. Those people will be attracted to a body of believers who minister to them. This means focusing on what the church can do outside its four walls to meet the needs of individuals.

**Develop a healthy atmosphere in the church.** Jesus said, "All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13:35, NIV). God will see to it that new believers are born into a spiritual atmosphere that is healthy. God seldom sends people to get saved in a church where there is strife.

**Keep a right attitude and be teachable.** Pastors need to take the lead in seeking help and learning all they can about what makes the church successful. They need to learn what should be done differently to obtain the desired results.

**Focus on excellence.** If we do not do things well, we infer that we do not have an excellent message for a dying world. We'll never reach perfection, but we can strive to be excellent in caring for the facilities, in organization, in preaching, and in music. Excellence will remove the hindrances that keep people from being properly affected by the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

Two ingredients produce spiritual life: the Spirit and the Word (John 6:63). The smaller church must focus on these two elements. Trying to attract people to the smaller church by programs is less effective. However, prayer will bring the Spirit's presence to the church and life to the individual. Outsiders will be attracted to the smaller church when they see Jesus' love flowing through the church.

The smaller church may not have all the resources that are available to the larger church, but it does have the same opportunity to utilize the essential elements that build the kingdom of God. It can reach people for Christ. If we seek to build the kingdom of God, God will build our churches. **e**

*Arden K. Adamson is Wisconsin-Northern Michigan District superintendent, Waupaca, Wisconsin.*

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