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Motivating and Preparing Pastors For Small, Rural Churches

Reverend Ralph V. Adcock

ABSTRACT

Thirty-six percent of Assembly of God churches are located in communities of less than five thousand people. Seventy-eight percent of these churches have fewer than one hundred people in attendance. Forty-seven percent have fewer than fifty people in their congregations. Many are in small towns and rural areas with declining populations. In the eyes of young men and women training for ministry, these are not desirable places to minister. Many ministers currently pastoring in small out-of-the-way places feel less than successful; they need encouragement and a change of attitude.

To discover the attitudes and concerns of Bible school students toward small rural church ministry, a survey was taken at Trinity Bible College in Ellendale, N. Dakota. To assist in answering these concerns, twenty-one pastors of small rural churches were interviewed by telephone. These pastors have been at their respective churches between twelve and thirty-five years. Each one expressed God's call to be the critical element in their pastorate.

To encourage and motivate young people to ministry in the small rural church, the following information will be shared: (1) understanding the call to ministry, (2) the characteristics of these churches, (3) the culture in these communities, and (4) conflict resolution. Research was confined to these states: North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

For a week, presentations were made in classes and chapel to the pastoral ministries students at Trinity Bible College. Pretest and posttest were administered with a marked change of

attitude toward ministry in the small rural church. Verbal and written evaluations of the presentations indicate the material to be much needed in considering small rural church ministry.

Mentoring Emerging Pacific Leaders in Fiji and Tonga

Reverend Judith A. Cagle

ABSTRACT

The project proposed to create an awareness of the need to mentor emerging church leaders in Fiji and Tonga. Growing churches in the region require the strengthening of leadership and the multiplying of their leadership base. A mentoring plan could assist in addressing this need.

The project focused on the research and development of a Pacific model by which experienced Christian leaders could mentor younger emerging leaders, and ministerial colleagues could encourage one another with accountability in peer mentoring on the local level. The project consisted of: (1) a literature research, (2) interviews with key resource persons, (3) the development of mentoring training materials, and (4) the creation of an Asia Pacific mentoring model with special emphasis on use in Fiji and Tonga.

The project design used a seminar participant survey and evaluation instrument. Individual and countrywide mentoring plans were developed. The goal was to develop a mentoring plan that could be implemented on the local level in Fiji and Tonga and could be adapted to other Pacific island nations.

The research showed that (1) emerging Christian leaders in Fiji and Tonga will benefit from the influence of mature established leadership; (2) experienced leaders will benefit from peer mentoring as a process by which to reach their full potential and avoid plateauing; (3) a leadership base can be multiplied.

Leadership Development in Asia Pacific

Reverend Wayne E. Cagle

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to create a Leadership Development Program for Christian leaders in Asia and the Pacific. By showing a need for such a program and describing how it would be prepared and executed, the Leadership Development Program (LDP), the researcher was able to offer the LDP as a practical means to develop leadership growth, enhance present leadership skills, and encourage church leaders in the region.

The project focused on the research and development of an Asia Pacific Leadership Development Program by which experienced, emerging, and potential Christian leaders could receive training to develop their leadership skills.

The project design included both a model of a leadership development program and the process used to build the model. The elements of the development plan were: (1) motivation of leaders, (2) development of training modules, (3) establishment of practical steps, (4) the providing of time and place for the program to be carried out, (5) encouraging the multiplication of leaders through mentoring, and (6) continual evaluation and improvement of the program.

The major implication of the research and development showed that Asia Pacific regional church leaders could benefit greatly from a Leadership Development Program, particularly through the Leadership Development Institute.

The findings of the project confirmed that highly significant growth in leadership motivation, skills, and knowledge occurred in the lives of the early participants with the strong probability that this leadership growth would spread among the emerging and future Christian leaders as the program becomes more firmly established.

**Using Small Groups to Build Community—
Bethany Christian Assembly, Everett, Washington**

Reverend Robert J. Carlson

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to intervene in Bethany Christian Assembly's minimum health factor by creating a community-building small group system for BCA that successfully involves a growing number of participants and trained leaders in holistic small groups. The *Natural Church Development* study by Christian Schwarz was used to determine the minimum health factor for BCA. The study revealed that BCA was deficient in the number of people involved in holistic small groups.

The author determined that practicing the five community-building components found in Acts 2:42-47 will produce holistic small groups. The project examines the biblical-theological foundations of community and small groups. The literature review produces eight models used by various churches in building community through small groups. After careful study and research of these models it is clear that a BCA model is needed in order to contextualize an effective small groups system for BCA.

The BCA model captured various principles employed by the other eight models but created a small groups system design specifically suited for BCA. The BCA model consists of six commitments: (1) the pastoral staff forming a G-12 group; (2) utilizing three-sized gatherings including large, midsize, and small groups; (3) organizing all small groups under six division pastors; (4) concentrating on involving newcomers, new members, and new converts in small groups; (5) connecting everyone to a mini-congregation and small group, either voluntarily or by assignment; (6) providing leaders regular training, prayer, and encouragement.

The results of the intervention are measured in seven distinct ways and show considerable improvement in strengthening BCA's minimum factor. A major implication of this project is that churches wishing to improve a minimum factor in holistic small groups can do so by following the steps taken by BCA.

**Communicating with Postmoderns:
A Doctor of Ministry Elective Class on Ministry in the Postmodern Context**

Reverend Earl G. Creps

ABSTRACT

The modernist worldview that has dominated North American culture for over two hundred years is gradually being replaced by a postmodern philosophy and the attendant culture of postmodernity. The vast majority of the evangelical church is either ignoring this development or responding to it with outrage. Consequently, Christian ministers are largely unprepared to communicate the gospel to postmodern people in relevant and compelling ways.

This project addresses the problem of postmodernism by creating a Doctor of Ministry elective course entitled *Communicating with Postmoderns* in order to assess the value of seminary training in preparing ministry practitioners to communicate a biblical gospel in ways that are culture-current. The course was taught at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri, October 1-5, 2001. Readings, class presentations, guest practitioners, and field observations provided the content of the class within an adult education paradigm that made use of “constructivist” methods that modeled the learning style of postmodernity itself.

The perceived effectiveness of the class for the participants was measured by a written survey and evaluated with a group debriefing interview. Participants experienced discomfort when dealing with postmodern issues, growing into a realization of their relevance only as the course progressed. The challenge of communicating with moderns on such concerns was one of the major learnings produced by the class. However, the response to the course was extremely positive in terms of its value as one method for developing communication models for involving postmoderns in the Christian experience.

Implications for Christian communicators are explored, as are the ramifications for the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary and its Doctor of Ministry program. Founded on modernist assumptions, the Seminary must re-evaluate how its D.Min. program will address an increasingly postmodern world.

**Developing Team Characteristics in Pastoral Staff
at Radiant Church Assembly of God, Colorado Springs, Colorado**

Reverend Timothy A. Hager

ABSTRACT

Local churches can benefit from increased collaborative work effort among their professional and volunteer staff. Developing team characteristics in a local church typically requires a new management paradigm. This paper is the product of a doctor of ministry project designed to build team characteristics in a pastoral staff. Key aspects of the project include exploring the biblical-theological basis for teamwork, reviewing general literature related to teams, identifying team characteristic strengths, and intervening in deficient team characteristics. The goal of the intervention is to boost team effectiveness and satisfaction among pastoral staff members.

Developing a Seminar on the Baptism in the Holy Spirit for Assemblies of God Churches in the Kentucky District

Reverend Arthur D. Heinz

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to develop a seminar on the baptism in the Holy Spirit that would be capable of accomplishing two goals: educating the participants on the Holy Spirit and Spirit baptism, and second, equipping the participants to effectively help others receive Spirit baptism. The project consisted of the following components: (1) a seminar pretest to determine the current knowledge level of the participants on the Holy Spirit and Spirit baptism; (2) a seminar survey of the participants' desires, needs, and experiences to discover the participants' interest and experiences in helping others receive Spirit baptism; (3) seminar class sessions based on the research of the biblical-theological review and literature review; (4) a seminar self-report to track the participants' activity in assisting others with Spirit baptism; (5) a seminar posttest to determine the level of increased knowledge during the seminar on the Holy Spirit and Spirit baptism; and (6) a seminar evaluation to determine how effective the various components of the seminar were for the development of the project.

The implication of the project is that church members can experience a marked increase in knowledge about the Holy Spirit and Spirit baptism through a seminar approach to the material, and church members can be equipped and motivated to attempt to help others receive Spirit baptism. Consequently, Assemblies of God churches in the Kentucky District should consider utilizing an intentional approach to educating their members in the knowledge of the Holy Spirit while equipping them to effectively assist others in receiving Spirit baptism.

**Facilitating Health and Growth in New Hope Church, Thousand Oaks, California,
by Discovering and Intervening in its “Minimum Factor.”**

Reverend Kent J. Ingle

ABSTRACT

New Hope Church in Thousand Oaks, California, has as one of its core values the desire to be healthy and experience numerical growth as it ministers in the twenty-first century. The purpose of this researcher was to assess the health of New Hope Church by discovering its greatest growth restrictive barrier known as the “minimum factor,” using Christian Schwarz’s natural church development theory and empirical findings of what constitutes church health.

According to Schwarz, there are eight essential qualities that make churches healthy: (1) empowering leadership, (2) gift-oriented ministry, (3) passionate spirituality, (4) functional structures, (5) inspiring worship, (6) holistic small groups, (7) need-oriented evangelism, and (8) loving relationships. Most churches are deficient in at least one of the eight qualities, with the most deficient quality being the “minimum factor.”

Knowing the minimum factor would enable the leadership of New Hope Church to create action steps to improve the health quality of that factor as well as the overall health and growth by raising the minimum factor after a few months of communicating and implementing the strategic action plan.

Using questionnaires provided by ChurchSmart Resources in Carol Stream, Illinois, a test group of thirty-one committed leaders, including the senior pastor, were evaluated. The evaluation results revealed New Hope’s minimum factor. The leadership of the church implemented an action plan to raise the minimum factor several points over the subsequent quarter.

The same test-group of thirty-one was reevaluated approximately six months later. The second set of scores revealed that the minimum factor had been raised substantially. New Hope

Church is experiencing dynamic, positive change and church health. The natural church development tools delivered objective results upon which the church could plan and adjust for healthier ministry.

The project includes a theological and biblical reflection to inform an understanding of the mission, health, and growth of the church in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 presents what theorists are saying about church health and growth. An outline of the process by which the assessment cycle was administered is described in chapters 4 and 5. The project concludes with a summary evaluation of the findings in chapter 6.

Results of the project can serve as an encouragement to pastors and church leaders who want their churches to be healthy and strong in the century ahead. Churches in decline or those that have reached a plateau will find through natural church development a greater understanding of how God wants His church to grow. They can learn how to release the growth potential within their church.

**Breaking Growth Barriers in Small Group Ministry
Glad Tidings Assembly of God, Decatur, Illinois**

Reverend Lori S. O'Dea

ABSTRACT

This project attempted to identify and eliminate growth barriers in the small group ministry of Glad Tidings Assembly of God, Decatur, Illinois. Prior to research and development of a plan to restart growth, the small group system had been plateaued for eighteen months. The project adopted a dual strategy, focusing on the internal barriers related to leadership development and the external barriers linked with nonparticipants.

Leadership development concentrated on the encouragement and continued growth of existing leaders, as well as the cultivation of new leaders. Through appreciative inquiry and personal interviews, coaching strategies were created and tested for both personal and group settings.

External system expansion dealt with nonparticipants: their identities, their cultures (philosophical, generational, and spiritual), and the communication processes necessary to incorporate them into small groups. A congregational survey identified the primary reasons for nonparticipation as failed communication and unrealized intentions. Promotional efforts were designed to raise awareness and facilitate existing opportunities for access to groups.

This project brought qualitative and quantitative growth to both leaders and participants. Adult congregational involvement moved from one-third to nearly one-half. The project design—multiple efforts aimed at the two critical growth factors of leaders and nonparticipants—verified the need for a systems approach to small group ministry.

The Identification and Implementation of Servant Leader Characteristics in Montana and North Dakota Churches of the Assemblies of God

Reverend Howard Young

ABSTRACT

The majority of North Dakota and Montana Assemblies of God churches exist in rural environments and many of their leaders are desirous and/or needful of positive and transformational strategies that can assist local churches in providing an effective response to the following fundamental needs:

1. There is a need to create and implement a New Testament model of ministry that can effectively respond to various church cultures.
2. There is a need to develop a ministry model which helps dispel a growing perception of the church as narcissistic and self-serving.
3. There is a need for a model of ministry that equips and empowers both the professional ministry and laity for effective caring and support ministry in the church and in the community.
4. There is a need to provide a ministry in which low-trust toward leadership may be compounded by high-control leadership styles.
5. There is a need to create a caring ministry atmosphere, which enhances the possibility of local church revitalization.

The purpose, therefore, of the project is to develop an applied training seminar that will serve as a basis for the development of servant leadership attitudes and behaviors within pastors and lay leaders that respond to the preceding needs. Values inculcated into the seminar process encouraged the development of people through innovative and biblically based opportunities for personal growth, the building of community through specific strategies that incorporate collaborative work, the cultivation of personal authenticity by raising levels of integrity and trust, providing leadership by developing a compelling and visionary future, and sharing leadership by creating shared vision.

Following the seminar, a pretest and posttest configuration was implemented utilizing the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA). This sixty-six-item instrument was used to measure outstanding servant leadership characteristics before and after the application of prayerfully devised servant strategies in each participating local church. After the implementation of servant strategies in each church, a posttest was given with the intention of recognizing any positive trends initiated by the servant strategies. A general questionnaire was also utilized in order to assess individual pastor's perceptions of the value and significance of the applied effort.

Basic comparison of the pretest and posttest data took place at the end of the study. Qualitative and quantitative information was gathered and shared with each pastor and church at the end of the study.