

**NEW LIFE CHURCH, SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI:
A CASE STUDY IN POSTMODERN MINISTRY**

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New Life Church in Springfield, Missouri has always charted a unique course. Throughout their 19-year history, the church has single-mindedly strived to understand contemporary culture and to fashion ministries that attract unchurched, secular people to the church.

In their desire to reach disconnected people and to remain on the cutting edge of culture, New Life has undergone three distinct philosophical shifts. Beginning in the *traditional evangelical* camp, they transitioned to the *pragmatic evangelical* camp in the mid-1990s as a *seeker model* church. They are currently engaged in the metamorphosis from a seeker church to a *younger evangelical, emerging model* church.

With the winds of postmodernism furiously blowing onto the shores of the American Church, New Life is responding with equal intensity in its efforts to engage culture for the sake of reaching lost people. Often criticized and misunderstood for their unorthodox approaches, they remain tenaciously committed to the task of fashioning ministries that reach unchurched, de-churched, and over-churched people.

Divesting themselves of many of the trappings of the institutional Church, New Life's approach represents a more organic attempt to follow in Jesus' footsteps. Utilizing music, the arts, and images from contemporary and ancient culture, New Life is reaching out to people who have given up on traditional approaches to church. Unimpressed with the mega-church models of ultra-modernity, New Life desires to join people relationally and assist them in becoming apprentices of Jesus.

The focus of this project is to produce a case study of New Life's approach to ministry giving special emphasis to adult discipleship and spiritual formation. Having caught the emerging church wind in their sails, New Life joins the growing group of younger churches that are venturing out into uncharted, postmodern waters. Some perceive these waters to be fraught with perilous dangers to both theology and practice since the waters steer away from routes that are more traditional.

This project provides an overview of New Life's attempt to come to terms with the impact of postmodernity on ministry. For the leaders of New Life it will supply an outsider's historical view of the congregation. For interested readers, it will offer categories and descriptions to assist them in their attempts at negotiating the seismic shifts that are shaking the foundations of the American Church. For all, it will present a challenge to lead the Church out into the uncharted waters with the confident certainty that Jesus is still the master of the seas.