

THE LEADING EDGE

leaders worth following

Earl Creps' monthly leadership newsletter

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<http://www.agts.edu/dmin/index>

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Blog edition

www.xanga.com/LeadingEdge

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New online course @ AGTS

PTHI 640 Issues in Emerging Culture is the first of many online courses that will be forthcoming from AGTS. What's even better is that the first group to take the course will receive a 50% discount! Check it out at:

http://www.agts.edu/news/news_archives/2004first_online_class.html The course convenes in January, so hurry to get the discount!

New blog version of the Leading Edge

I have been blogging this newsletter since last month ("blog" is short for "web log," essentially a personal website where you can post thoughts, photos, etc. at your convenience and receive feedback in the form of posts, emails, etc.) Check it out and post your comments at: www.xanga.com/LeadingEdge

New online journal @ AGTS!

Don't miss the AGTS online journal of practical theology entitled, *Encounter*, which explores the nature and function of Pentecostal ministry. Very practical. Very insightful. Check it out at: <http://www.encounterjournal.com>

Impact player: Lattis Campbell (Cohort 5) reports

"Over the past several weeks, our emphasis has been on putting together various teaching tools in order to effectively communicate the need for Local Church Leadership Development and to help existing leaders deal with a variety of issues concerning leadership. These tools are being put together on a CD....The goal is to make all of the resources of the Alaska Leadership Development Network available to as many leaders and churches as possible. Every church in Alaska will be offered the opportunity to have Sharlotte and me come and present these teachings or, if the present church leadership wishes, they may use these tools themselves in order to help with the task of local church leadership development." Go cohort 5! (Contact Lattis at: www.lattis-sharlotte.org)

Internet resources : the American church

<http://www.TheAmericanChurch.org> Dave Olson is making available his findings from what appears to be the most comprehensive database of church attendance statistics ever assembled. Unlike the results of telephone surveys, Dave works from actual attendance figures. A unique resource that offers a disturbing view of where things stand. Check out Dave's report, "12 Surprising Findings About the American Church," as well as his national, state, and metro area reports.

FasTrak: from MA to D.Min. eligibility in half the time

Our new pre-doctoral program can take a qualified MA holder in full-time ministry to academic eligibility for the D.Min. (M.Div. Equivalency) in half the time using a specially designed course format. Thinking about a D.Min., but not sure how to get there? Check out FasTrak at:

<http://www.agts.edu/fastrak/index.html>

Statistics: church attendance trends

Dave Olson reports (based on church attendance figures) that if present trends continue, 17.1% of American adults will be attending church regularly by 2010, and only 11.7% by 2050. Attendance is at 18.7% this year.

--Dave Olson www.TheAmericanChurch.org

Read this book: Radical Outreach

George Hunter, *Radical Outreach: Recovery of Apostolic Ministry and Evangelism*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2003. (208 pages) Hunter has been in the game a long time and never fails to open up my thinking. This book stresses ministering directly to the unchurched (as opposed to inviting them to hear worship and preaching) as a critical path to re-evangelization of North America.

http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/068707441X/qid=1099788551/sr=1-1/ref=sr_1_1/104-1823944-2545550?v=glance&s=books

Quotable:

"We spent most of the 20th century creating things that people somewhere might like. Then we broadcast messages to find those people and get their money. Today, instead of giving people a lot of choices and taking orders, we are beginning to serve customers better by getting to know them. A company that knows what I want has a great advantage over a company that offers me a slew of choices and makes me sift through them."

--Martha Rogers www.fastcompany.com/realtime/philly/mentors.html, partner, Peppers and Rogers Group
<<http://fcke.fastcompany.com/fullfcke.html?cid=1750>>

LeaderLife: mission or makeover?

It seems that every other television program these days has to do with giving someone's house a "makeover" that changes the look of each room with new paint, furniture, etc. This endeavor usually assumes that the basic structure of the house is fine, requiring only a cosmetic upgrade.

Are we thinking about the North American Church in the same way? When expressing concern about the state of the domestic Church, I have been rebuffed at times by leaders who cite the fact that 40% of Americans still go to worship most Sundays.

But is that really how it is? Recently, a presentation by Covenant researcher Dave Olson forced me to re-think this issue, and strengthened my conviction that the time for "makeovers" is long past.

Olson argues that the 40% figure is based on telephone surveys which are subject to the "halo effect," the tendency of people to report their own behavior in unrealistically positive terms. He has assembled a huge database of actual church attendance figures and compared them to US population trends. Here are a few of his key findings:

- 20% of the population attended church regularly in 1990
- 18.7% of the population attended regularly in 2000
- Hawaii was the only state to experience attendance gains greater than population growth between 1990-2000
- 38,000 new churches would have been needed to keep up with population growth in the last decade. The US saw a net gain of 4600.

One could argue with Olson's methodology, or point to examples of very effective churches as exceptions, or contend that these declines are someone else's problem. There may be some truth in all of these statements, but the overall conclusion is hard to avoid: rather than being stable, the Anglo evangelical church may actually be in free fall compared to population growth. (Olson's research is only one representative of a much larger body of work that comes to the same conclusion.)

The most important question before leaders today, then, is whether we will radically re-commit to the mission of Jesus to seek and save the lost. Our organizations must be aligned with this mission as their first priority.

The alternative of "makeover" ministry is very appealing, offering safety, the congratulations of friends, stability, and perhaps even advancement. But it is not why Jesus came, and it is not why he sent the Spirit to fill us with power.

My major recommendation: check out Dave Olson's website at www.TheAmericanChurch.org and let the numbers disturb you as they disturbed me, and then start praying....

Be a leader worth following,

Earl
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D.Min. program mission: transforming leaders to transform their organizations

D.Min. program vision: leaders worth following

D.Min. program values:

- **the extra mile**—others before ourselves
- **the personal touch**—everyone counts
- **the cutting edge**—we get there first
- **the real deal**—authenticity in everything
- **the better way**—listen to improve
- **the positive word**—choose to encourage
- **the unique person**—enjoy diversity
- **the X factor**—synergy through trust and truth

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Leading Edge Blog Edition:

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Leading Edge Archive:

Past issues are archived at: http://agts.edu/dmin/leading_edge/index.html

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