

THE LEADING EDGE

The electronic newsletter of the AGTS D.Min. Program in Pentecostal Leadership
Shaping servant leaders to change the world in the power of the Spirit
October 2001

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HARD NUMBERS: we often conduct original research on how ministers are experiencing their leadership challenges. In a recent AGTS survey of campus pastors, 60% said the ministry is harder than it used to be. A similar survey of Assemblies of God military chaplains turned up the same results. One of the campus pastors described the increasing difficulty as, "More plates to spin!" These early returns would say that things are getting tougher out there.

AGTS experienced a record-breaking opening fall enrollment when registration ended 9/20/01. A total of 332 students enrolled, up 9.9%, surpassing the all time record of 311 in 1988.

A LITTLE POSTMODERN HUMOR: "What do you get when a used car dealer becomes postmodern? A person who makes you an offer you can't understand."

IMPACT PLAYERS: "Doug Earls (cohort 4) pastors Calvary Chapel in Buffalo, Missouri. On September 10th, Doug was the featured speaker at the Freewill Baptist Pastors & Laypeoples Conference. He spoke on the purposeful nature of the local congregation and presented much of the material he has written or adapted to transition his church into a highly effective evangelistic congregation. Doug is now receiving requests for copies of his training material and is becoming a key influencer among Free Will Baptist pastors in Missouri. His growing church has recently added an informal, multi-media Sunday night service that is connecting with several age groups. Go, cohort 4!

LEADERLIFE: THE GIFT OF INTERPRETATION

Fundamental changes are underway in the Church. But change makes people react in strange ways: anger, anxiety, and aggression are just a few examples. Anyone who has transitioned a church knows what I mean.

When new information floods in, leaders must exercise the "gift of interpretation." They are responsible not to tell people *what* to think, but to help them understand *how* to think. The right perspective on new situations can make the difference between critical hostility and gracious acceptance.

Since people think in imagery rather than text, using the right metaphor can go a long way to cultivating a healthy perspective on change. Most of us want to be part of some larger story more than we want a technical grasp on organizational theory.

I find that giving people meaningful imagery can bring clarity to confusion as well as reduce anxiety about the pace and scale of the changes around us.

Here are a few images drawn from various generations that can help Christian organizations interpret what is happening in the larger church today:

1. Hollywood: the break up of the studio system with its centralized control of motion picture production in the 1930s and 40s created the modern movie industry with its free market of talent, financing, and skill. Similarly, centralized control in denominations and churches is in eclipse, moving ministry from program to project. If seen as an asset, this is an opportunity to create empowered, highly creative ministry teams. As in film production, the project does not have to last forever to be valid.
2. Communication: the break up of AT&T divided this telephone monopoly into many regional mini-companies that have become major players in their own right. No ministry can expect such a "captive market" today. The culture around us, owes us nothing. Facing this fact is critical to survival. The break up of the USSR would be another example of this principle. (Also, of the fact that change is costly.)
3. Sports: the advent of free agency in baseball led to much more mobility by players and much, much higher salaries. As organizations free their people from rigid categories and work patterns, everyone's value increases, although mobility is the price. The de-regulation of the airlines would support this theory as well. Prices fell, but so did the luxury "feel" of air travel. Are we willing to sacrifice padded pews to bring more people into the church? Even postmodern lunches aren't free.
4. Internet: the worldwide web has changed everything by divorcing information from authority. No one needs to depend on a person with a position to grant access to data, business, or opportunity. New edge churches and organizations will resemble the internet much more than the bureaucratic structures we've all seen depicted on flowcharts. Innovative groups will be more like floating alliances or networks. The younger

generations expect free access to resources with a minimum of hierarchy.

Those you lead will draw conclusions about what is happening in the church. You become the leader by giving them an interpretive scheme with which they can understand and accept change as part of the new world. They may not be candidates for a paradigm shift themselves, but everyone can give innovators room and grace to try new things without condemnation.

Earl Creps, Ph.D.
D.Min. Program Director, AGTS

DATA DUMP: INTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER

In his recent research on American congregations, Thom Rainer found:

4% of those born between 1977 and 1994 are Christians, while 65% of the generation born before 1946 are Christians.

4% of the congregations could be described as "effective evangelistic churches" 83% had no intentional plan for how their congregation would reach the lost in their communities.

75% of the formerly unchurched said someone from the congregation shared the plan of salvation with them-mostly this was not done by staff members.

Among all churches, the average retention rate for new members is 35%, but that shoots up to 72% for churches that offer new member classes.

You can find out more about Rainer's research in his latest book, Surprising Insights from the Unchurched.

http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0310236487/qid=1000173417/sr=1-9/ref=sc_b_9/104-2176002-2223927

LINKS TO THE FUTURE: RESOURCES

<http://www.compare-stuff.com/>

Compare almost anything with almost anything else. For example, which city has the best bread, Rome or Paris? The illustrative possibilities are almost endless!

<http://sundaysolutions.com/soundbytes.html>

Produced by David Mains. Resources for preaching that arrive in a handy email form that can be copied right into your word processor. Keyed to breaking news stories. Worth checking out.

<http://www.agts.edu>

Check out the newly re-designed AGTS website! The D.Min. page now has syllabi, handbooks, etc. available online. We are adding more every week.

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

My personal page has lots of articles and other resources. I will be adding more

items regularly. (<http://www.agts.edu/faculty/creps.html>)

Let us know of any resources you feel would be helpful for our Leading Edge subscribers.

IMPACT PLAYERS: D.MIN. PARTICIPANTS CHANGING THEIR WORLD
Rob Carlson, Pastor of Bethany Christian AG in Everett, Washington and member of Cohort 3, will be working with the AGTS Distance Education Team (directed by Randy Walls of Cohort 6) in team teaching a Ministry Development Seminar at Northwest College in June of 2002. We believe that the D.Min. program will be a major source of college faculty in the years ahead. Graduates will multiply their ministries by preparing the next generation.

WE RECOMMEND: *Postmodern Youth Ministry* by Tony Jones. (Youth Specialties, 2001.) This book is red hot among youth ministers across the country. Has a good synopsis of postmodernism and lots of commentary by others writing on this theme (Sweet, McLaren, etc.) Read this to know what your youth pastor is thinking about. Read it even if you don't have a youth pastor.
http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/031023817X/qid=1000339908/sr=1-7/ref=sc_b_7/104-2176002-2223927

TOOLS: HARD LESSONS ABOUT POWERPOINT (FOR NON-TECHIES)
Many hours of presenting with PowerPoint support have taught me some hard lessons. The best way to avoid this is to have a 14-year old assistant. Lacking that, I strongly recommend theses for PPT:

1. Actually learn the features of PowerPoint! Think of it. Did you know there is a button (lower left corner of the screen) that will format your speaking notes with the appropriate slide at the top of the page? This is PPT's most valuable and least-used feature.
2. Never look at the screen while presenting. This is totally bush league! Use TV monitors for platform speaking (if possible), and always give your operator a set of your notes. The "print" function will let you print up to 6 slides on one page. Perfect for the operator, but only if you make notes about the nature of your transitions and special effects. If it's really complex, arrange a rehearsal.
3. Don't let the slides be the star. There is a fine line between visual support and being the narrator of a slideshow. So use fewer slides than you think you need. One per main point is plenty. Either they serve you, or you serve them.
4. Support the visuals with handouts. This is especially helpful to cover a variety of learning styles (left brainers love to hold paper while listening) and/or if your presentation is kind of complex (which is another whole problem.)

5. Beware of PPT fatigue. Many professionals are now so exposed to PPT at work that they have "slide burnout." Know when to go slideless. At times it can be refreshing. Moreover, there are many other communication methods at your disposal. Don't become a PPT addict.
6. Practice, practice, practice. It takes a while to become PPT proficient. Keep at it, and get feedback from those you trust.

HOUSEKEEPING: MAY SESSION MOVES TO JUNE

Starting in 2002, the D.Min. Summer session will move from May to June. AGTS graduation moves to May that year, so a change avoids many administrative complications. It also lengthens the brief interval between the Spring (February) and Summer classes, much to everyone's relief.

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