

THE LEADING EDGE

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

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FROM THE DIRECTOR: A D.Min. participant remarked to me last week that the program had changed his life. In our talk we described the change as something like having one's head unscrewed (like a light bulb), and a new head put in its place. Another remarked that, without the program, it would have taken him years to sort out what needed to happen in his church. Today, his congregation welcomes people into God's family every week.

My own experience as both a pastor and a participant is the same. The D.Min. is not about education and degrees. It is about the Spirit transforming leaders and revitalizing churches, chaplancy, and missions work.

How does this transformation happen?

Through the power of community in our cohort model.

Through the power of concentration in our leadership focus.

Through the power of experience as an in-service degree.

Our program does not require you to leave your ministry context. A real-world environment is a powerful teacher. In fact, we enroll only individuals who are active in full-time ministry.

In June we will graduate our first 9 participants. They will influence hundreds of other leaders, who will influence thousands. The church does not need a new mission. It simply needs to do the mission it already has. We help participants re-discover this mission and prepare themselves for their role in it.

Earl Creps, Ph.D.

D.Min. Program Director, AGTS

HOW DO POSTMODERNS HEAR THE GOSPEL?

According to Brian McLaren: "1) Postmodern people are a lot less impressed with our claims to being right; they want to know if we're good. Good deeds and good relationships are more important to postmodern people than good arguments; 2) Truth is relational. It isn't just an abstract proposition floating in a rational vacuum. Truth is incarnated in people, relationships, lives. For this reason, Paul's words (and Jesus' words!) become more powerful and relevant than ever--without love, we're nothing!"

LINKS TO THE FUTURE: RESOURCES

http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0801090881/qid=988737562/sr=1-3/ref=sc_b_4/103-8540908-7868646

Tom Sine & Ravi Zacharias' book, *Mustard Seed vs McWorld: Reinventing Life and Faith for the Future* (Baker, 1999) gives you an over the horizon look at the forces that are stressing us out and tearing us up. With special emphasis on the under-35 generation, a leading futurist and a leading apologist talk about what it will take to live a sane Christian life and be a loving Christian witness in our global culture. Not your usual "top ten trends" book.

<http://hebron.christianitytoday.com/le/2001/002/21.103.html>

Check out our own Stephen Lim's article, "Deciding without Dividing: How to Keep Tough Choices from Fracturing Your Church," in *Leadership*, Spring 2001. Excellent insights into the practices of managing change.

<http://www.pastors.com/pcom/specials/40WaysBaptism.asp>

Learn more than 40 practical ways to increase your baptisms this next year. Drawn from the practical experience of Saddleback Church, a congregation that baptizes over 1100 people per year. Good helps and a great snapshot of this church's life and philosophy. You'll love it if you love lists.

INSIGHT: WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

The softening of the economy is creating a new class of seekers: the economically anxious. The stock market and openness to God tend to be inversely related for several reasons:

- 1) The Martha Stewart Factor: filling up our lives with "things" assumes a certain tomorrow. When the future becomes uncertain, having a picture-perfect decorator home feels like an anchor, not a sail.
- 2) The Sinking Feeling Factor: when checking balances decline and mutual funds plummet, the self-worth we tie to those things evaporates. A search for a new source of personal worth is a natural reaction.
- 3) The Running on Empty Factor: to be blunt--less discretionary cash makes competing weekend activities less feasible.

- 4) The Hardship Factor: John Maxwell notes that we assume credit for prosperity. Tough times demolish this myth and force us to become more reflective about what it all means. As philosopher John Kavanaugh puts it, our material poverty forces us to face the poverty within ourselves.
- 5) The Physician Heal Thyself Factor: churches that are caught up in the consumerist mentality that is devouring the culture around them will be too self-absorbed to respond to this season of opportunity. Only passionate, mission-driven churches will care enough to act. They will address both economic and spiritual needs in a holistic fashion.
--Earl Creps. Research from Susan Hogan/Albach, *The Kansas City Star*, April 28, 2001, p, F-1.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES: "Transforming Church Ministry for the 21st Century" is a partnership seminar (AGTS/DHM) featuring church planter/author Brian McLaren. It will be held just before General Council, August 6&7, 2001 at the Westin Crown Hotel in Kansas City. McClaren will focus on how churches can and must navigate the cultural upheaval of the new millennium. The Seminar can be taken for AGTS credit! Contact AGTS Continuing Education at 1-800-467-2487 x1004, email: agts-ext@agseminary.edu. Internet: <http://www.agts.edu/ACADEMIC/extension/Extension.html>

IMPACT: D.MIN. PROJECTS SYMPOSIUM

AGTS will host its first Doctor of Ministry Project Symposium on Thursday, June 7th at 10:00 am in our Chapel. The D.Min. in Pentecostal Leadership is a professional, in-service degree. One phase of the program is the writing of a doctoral project embodying field research from the participant's own ministry context.

The Symposium is an opportunity for each of our graduates to present a brief report of this important research, followed by a reflective response from President Byron Klaus.

An all-you-can-drink designer coffee hour beginning at 9:15 am in the Great Hall will precede the Symposium. Enjoy a cappuccino on us! Following the Symposium, please stay with us for a reception and light buffet at 11:30 am.

Please consider yourself our guest!

WE RECOMMEND...http://www.findarticles.com/cf_0/PI/index.ihtml
Findarticles.com is a very handy little search engine for locating magazine and journal articles, a rich source of information that other engines tend to bypass. Simple and effective. Try punching in "postmodern."

TOOLS: SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR CONGREGATIONS

http://fact.hartsem.edu/Workbooks/workbook_frame.htm

Hartford Seminary's new report on Faith Communities Today (FACT) is available online. This survey of 14,000 congregations is the largest ever done and covers leadership issues of all sorts. It also features an Interactive Workbook in which you can assess your congregation relative to your (or other) denominations. A useful tool for strategic planning and self-assessment.

Carl Dudley, a lead author of the study, recently summarized three of its most important conclusions:

- 1) Leaders must be trained in conflict and change management.
- 2) Worship issues drive much of the conflict and require special navigation skills
- 3) A clear sense of purpose and high expectations are critical to effective parish ministry. Good people with a vague direction will most likely fail.

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