

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

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ARCHIVES & IDEAS

Past issues of the Leading Edge are archived at:

http://agts.edu/dmin/leading_edge/index.html

Email your ideas for future issues to: dfegler@agseminary.edu

<mailto:dfegler@agseminary.edu>

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD: D.MIN. E-GROUP BEGINS

The first installment of our new electronic community will be arriving shortly, if you do not have it already. If you are new to E-groups, they are basically a large, ongoing conversation carried out by email among a group, rather than between individuals. Messages are sent to the group using an e-mail address supplied by the D.Min. Team. Replying works as it would for any other e-mail. This group is limited to D.Min. participants, graduates, and faculty. It is moderated, that is the Director screens all the messages before forwarding them to the group. Also, the group is limited to leadership issues, resources, and challenge. There will be no axe grinding or rabbit trailing. It all depends on participation, so jump in.

Welcome to the neighborhood!

QUOTABLE: THE VALUE OF COURAGE

"Whenever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision."

--Peter Drucker

LEADERLIFE: WHY ARE SO MANY PEOPLE TURNED OFF TO CHURCH?

It's our pleasure to introduce Pastor Greg Wingard of Redwood Hills Church (Woodinville, WA) as this month's guest columnist. Greg is a church planter who is in the midst of a unique study of the attitudes of pre-Christians in his region (near Seattle). While others have run surveys, Greg is actually interviewing

unchurched people in quantity and depth.

Below he introduces the basic concept behind this research and lets you know where you can access the results:

***Why are so many people turned off to church?
Don't ask me. Ask them.***

Before planting our church, a friend and I pounded the pavement and did just that. I expected to get the familiar results: "irrelevant sermons," "they want my money." Boy, was I in for a surprise! You know what I heard? "Intolerance."

Intolerance? Whoa! What was I supposed to do with that? I wasn't hearing anything of the sort coming out of Evangelicalism. Evangelicalism seemed to be making a last stand against the "evil" Clintons and "Demoncrats." But as I listened to all those unchurched folks tell me their war stories, I heard the Spirit of Jesus. It always amazes me. Jesus shows up in the strangest places. Through those conversations, Jesus shaped my heart-and He shaped the church that we would help launch in September 1998.

But that was 1998. It is now 2002.

So I am doing it again. I am currently conducting 100 conversational surveys with people who don't go to church. As of this writing, I've spoken with 37 people at length. From these conversations, I want much more than information-I want to get into their hearts. These people are friends, neighbors, and work associates of people in our church. They have been invited to participate in advance and they come to the phone appointments primed. I am not exaggerating when I say that this investment is producing some of the most valuable information I have ever encountered as a church leader. But it is also proving to be vastly more time-consuming than we anticipated. When we're done, we'll have 225 hours invested.

So now let me contradict myself. At the beginning I said, "Don't ask me. Ask them." But I know that most church leaders won't make this time investment. We've had an enormous interest in the information and are exploring publishing options. In some format, we'll make it available. But if you're going to utilize material like ours, can I make a suggestion? Also consider doing at least some of your own digging.

*We can listen to unchurched people first or second-hand. But however we listen, we will discover that **they** are the only ones who can hand us the keys to **their hearts**.*

If you would like to get on the waiting list for the report/book that will be constructed at the end of the project, email Greg at greg.w@redwoodhills.com

[<mailto:greg.w@redwoodhills.com>](mailto:greg.w@redwoodhills.com) or call Redwood Hills Church at (425) 481-3600. It will contain lots of brain juice! There will be interactive and on-the-edge questions to provoke your own thinking, as well as plenty of information that can help you in conducting your own conversational surveys. We hope to have it available by September.

If you want some other models of research on the unchurched, check out Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Church*. His "Saddleback Sam" profile is probably the granddaddy of them all. Also, James Emery White's *Rethinking the Church* contains the results of his congregation's survey of community attitudes towards church.

But remember this: Rick's work dates from the last century, and White's study was not done in your town. There is no substitute for listening to the unchurched yourself, even if it is in an "unscientific" form on the sidelines at a soccer game. Until we join their conversation we have no right to ask them to join ours. Thanks to Greg Wingard for showing us the way.

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

DATA DUMP: THE NEW RELIGIOUS AMERICA

[<http://www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/press/REVIEW/winter2002/easterbrook.htm>](http://www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/press/REVIEW/winter2002/easterbrook.htm)

Diana Eck reports that the U.S. is "the most religiously diverse nation in the world." In this on-line article from The Brookings Institution, Greg Easterbrook reviews Eck's book, *The New Religious America* along with other facts and figures on the diversity that is now the context for all Christian ministry in North America. A brief, useful overview of one of the key ministry issues of our era.

LINKS TO THE FUTURE: WEB RESOURCES

[<http://www.adherents.com>](http://www.adherents.com)

Adherents.com is a growing collection of over 41,000 adherent statistics and religious geography citations -- references to published membership/adherent statistics and congregation statistics for over 4,200 religions, churches, denominations, religious bodies, faith groups, tribes, cultures, movements, ultimate concerns, etc. Basically, researchers can use this site to answer such questions as "How many Quakers live in Indiana?" or "What percentage of the world is Buddhist?" Presents data from both primary research sources such as government census reports, statistical sampling surveys and organizational reporting, as well as citations from secondary literature which mention adherent statistics.

[<http://www.margi.com/index.html>](http://www.margi.com/index.html)

Margi Systems offers software/hardware that allow you to make video projection

presentations (e.g., PowerPoint) using only your PDA! While not every model is supported, many of the Handspring and Compaq devices are compatible. Check it out and get ready to leave your laptop at home.

http://agts.edu/faculty/faculty_publications/bibliographies/creps_bibliography/index.html

Follow this link to my Emerging Culture/Emerging Church Resource List. It is a free pdf download containing approximately 800 resources (with an annotated web section) on the emerging church. A revised edition will appear during November with an improved system of categories and about 1000 resources. One of many resources available free on my page.

WE RECOMMEND: GOING DEEPER WITH GOD LEADERSHIP RETREAT

This 4-tape audio series by Rick Warren was presented at a Saddleback leadership retreat. It focuses on growing the leader's personal relationship with God as the key to longevity and effectiveness. Topics covered include "Personal Cleansing," "Personal Consecration", and "Personal Commissioning." A powerful tool for your own spiritual growth and/or developing a retreat for your leaders. You can check it out at www.pastors.com <<http://www.pastors.com>>

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Please feel free to forward to a friend.

THE LEADING EDGE—cutting a path from today to tomorrow