

In the Footsteps of **BOLD** Leaders

AGTS alumni lead their churches in bold initiatives to reach their communities





Influencing a Community

John Gregg (M.A. 1994) is pastor of Christian Center in Kalispell, Mont., a church of 2,300 in a region of 100,000. He is a member of the AGTS Board of Directors.



In nine years of pastoring larger churches in medium-sized cities, I felt as called to the larger region in which my church resided as I did to the church itself. This influences the way I think, strategize and pray. I constantly seek God in terms of leveraging our kingdom influence throughout our valley until all have heard the gospel.

Let me offer a few practical insights I've gleaned from my own experience and from some inspiring mentors.

Impassion and train your church to influence their sphere with the gospel. Leaders must cast vision, arouse passion, lead change and establish core values in their church's culture. Preach, teach, model and mentor a deep compassion for those far from God and make it a year-round, full-court press in your people's awareness.

Cultivate a balanced "feel" to your public services and ministries that has broad community appeal.

Without apology we are a Spirit-empowered family of believers, but we also nurture a church culture that exudes authenticity, acceptance and practicality. Discern what God is calling you to be and clearly, relentlessly articulate your God-given biblical vision, purpose and values to your church.

Align your evangelistic strategy to your target audience. Does your brand reflect your region? Does it fit? Intentionally position your church for maximum kingdom influence.

Develop a spiritual "nursery" for new converts. Have an infrastructure of assimilation ready and waiting for baby believers.

Build meaningful relationships with influential, secular leadership in your region. Get out there! Too many pastors isolate themselves in their church building. Earn the right to be heard.

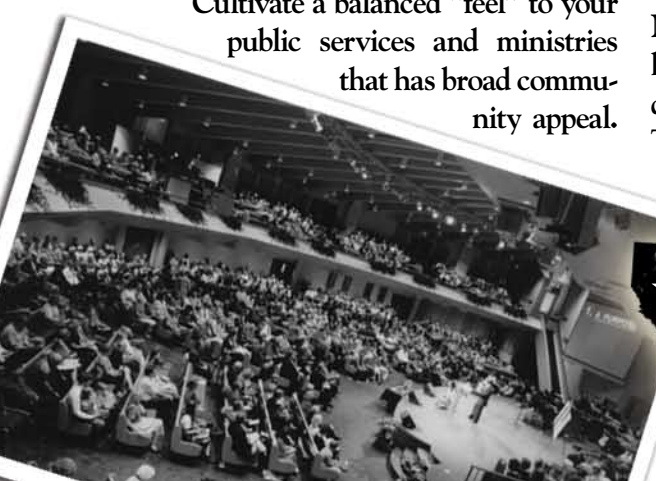
Nurture warm relationship with leaders from other churches, denominations and ministries. Think "kingdom," not "my church."

Connect with your region.

Educational/civic/economic interests, governmental leadership (state and federal), Rotary, health club, youth sports, radio spots on popular secular stations are some of the potential avenues.

Create at least one annual evangelistic outreach. Make sure it has broad regional appeal, is executed with excellence and is centered on the cross. Our expression of this is a Broadway-style Christmas musical that has a positive presence throughout the region.

Pray that God will help you get your arms around the "soul" of your region. Weep with compassion. Someone said a "prophet" is not so much one who foresees coming events, as it is one who sees meaning in the current event. Oh, God, give us our entire region for the gospel—lest we die!



Financially Secure, Spiritually Needy



Kay Gross (D.Min. 2004) and her husband, Dave (M.Div. 1980), pastor Radiant Life Church, in Dublin, Ohio. They planted the church in 1980 with two couples meeting in their living room. Today, the church runs over 450 and is building a \$5 million facility. Kay is also a member of the AGTS Board of Directors.

Dublin is a thriving northwest suburb of Columbus filled with executives and upper management. It is a beautiful community, proud of its heritage and prosperity.

In the early years, it seemed we drew people from everywhere except Dublin, but we never forgot our original call to the financially secure but spiritually needy elite of this community. How do you reach people that appear to need so little?

As we have allowed God to direct our ministries and programs, three outreaches stand out.

Several years ago, we began presenting large “garden variety” cantatas. Over time, God provided the vision and expertise for us to produce quality productions that appealed to

the Dublin community’s love of art and theatre.

First, *The Promise*, an Easter passion play, received wide acclaim. Soon, *A Christmas Masterpiece* and later, *The Gospel According to Scrooge* became a Christmas tradition for many in the community.

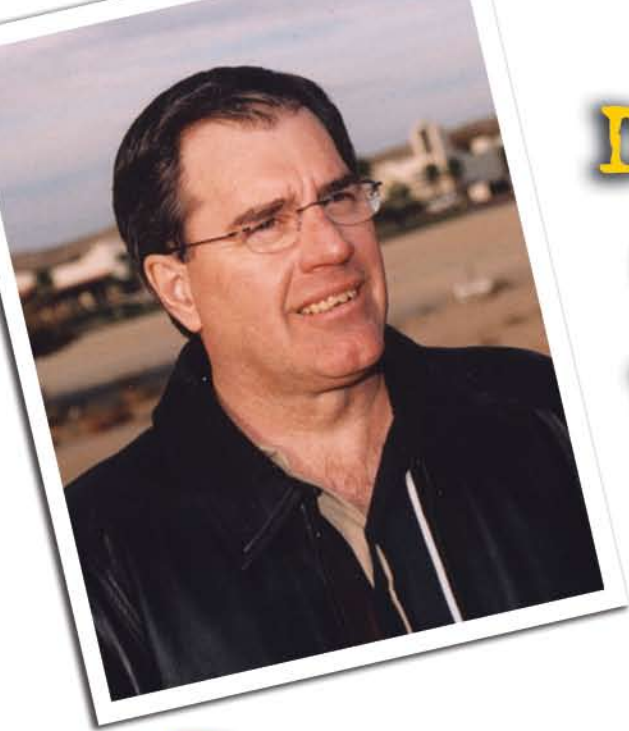
Since most parents in Dublin work outside the home, childcare is a significant need. Our children’s pastor began a two-week summer day camp program. About 100 children, most from pre-Christian homes, pay us to provide Vacation Bible School curriculum and fun field trips. We have also added Radiant Kids Daycare so that we can impact the

children of this community on an on-going basis.

Dublin has a lot of kids, and most of them love soccer. We decided to reach out to them through a sport they love. So, two years ago, we started Soccerfest, a day of free fun, food, inflatables, soccer games and coaching.

These outreaches weren’t in our original plan, at least not in the size and quality they have become. And yet, each has provided an avenue of ministry that is making a difference in the way the community views Christ and his church.





David and Goliath: One Church Against the Gambling Industry

Charles Mattix (M.A. 1998) pastors Bastow AG, Barstow, Calif.

Adapted from "Pastors Predict Bleak Future if Local Casinos Open" by John W. Kennedy, printed in Today's Pentecostal Evangel (December 28, 2003).

In 2003 pastor Charles Mattix took on an industry he believed to be eroding the moral foundation of his communities—casino gambling.

With the blessings of his California congregation, Mattix is now an energized community activist—speaking out against the rapid multiplication of casinos across his state.

He has lobbied in the nation's capital, spoken at city council meetings, encouraged residents to sign petitions, helped spearhead a community forum

attended by more than 500 residents and organized a responsible growth coalition to fight the building of a casino in their city.

"The impact on the social fiber of our community would be devastating," Mattix said. "Families would split, credit card debt would rise, crime would increase and there would be more drug addiction."

More than 40 local pastors signed a letter that the ministerial association presented to the city council objecting to the moral and social problems the casino would cause.

"I owed it to my congregation to confront this issue," Mattix said. Forty of his 145-member congregation attended a local council meeting,

raising questions about potential problems from traffic congestion to an endangered water supply.

Local politicians often believe gambling is an attractive option to raising taxes or cutting programs. But the added costs for more police officers, street repairs and welfare services, to name a few, don't make it such an economic bargain.

Mattix said, "I will do whatever I can to keep Barstow from becoming a little Las Vegas. I fear that the casino will become the plantation and the city of Barstow its slaves."

Mattix says the issue is too crucial for Christians to ignore.

"Gambling deserves our most sincere and aggressive rebuke," Mattix says. "If the church ignores gambling ventures, it's a 'sure bet' that the personal and interpersonal damage will be irreparable."

