

# T. E. A. C. H.

April, May, June

Provided by the Christian Education Department

Volume 5 Number 4

## VISION OF A GROWING CHURCH

"Who's in charge here?" That single issue probably creates more division in today's church than any other. We need to be reminded that the church is not a democracy, where the congregation votes on every issue. Nor is it a dictatorship, where a superstar pastor mandates every policy. It is a Christocracy, where mature leaders are chosen to direct the affairs of the church under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Verbal attacks, withholding funds, anonymous letters, perpetual negative votes, gossip, and disobedience of simple instructions are all ways that power struggles are manifested and none of them have a place in the church. Leadership in the church is really more of a partnership than it is a competition. In a real sense, all Christians are followers, taking our direction from the Lord of us all.

A vision is simply what we believe the Lord is saying to us about our future. Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus in their book *Leaders* suggest the following components be considered in the development of any vision.

**Foresight:** to judge how the vision fits with the way the environment of the organization may evolve.

**Hindsight:** so that the vision does not violate the traditions and culture of the organization.

**World View:** within which to determine the impact of possible new developments and trends.

**Depth Perception:** so that the whole picture can be seen in appropriate detail and perspective.

**Peripheral Vision:** so that possible responses of competitors and other stakeholders to the new direction can be comprehended.

**Revision:** so that all visions previously synthesized are constantly reviewed as the environment changes.

While these insights come from a secular book they provide a good framework to work from in asking God to help us "see" our future as He would have it be. The best methods must be saturated with prayer. We need to ask the Lord to help us see things as He does and to help us become more aware of what He would have us be and

do in the days ahead.

Wayne Schmidt offers some very practical ideas for vision development in his book *Leading When God Is Moving*. He suggests six practical steps that are helpful in vision development.

1. Devote a considerable amount of time to reading about vision.
2. Devote concentrated time to prayer.
3. Create a "rough draft" of a vision statement to indicate that the statement is in process and that other input would be welcome.
4. Meet with staff members, board members and other lay leaders to refine the vision statement. Incorporating refinements from  
(continued on page 2)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Project C Trip	Page 2
First Annual Christian Education Teacher Appreciation Dinner	Page 2
Understanding Evangelism	Page 3
Understanding Church Growth	Page 4
Understanding How New People Fit In	Page 5
Growing in a Church	Page 6

others to gain a measure of ownership of the final statement.

5. Present the revised copy to various groups within the church for reaction and input. This step is necessary to expose blind spots that may have been overlooked.
6. Present the final copy to the whole congregation for formal adoption.

Schmidt goes on to explain that the primary value of a vision statement is found in the following reality.

"Momentum is developed by creating a clear and focused vision statement. Momentum is drained by shooting at nothing or attempting to do everything." In the work of ministry without some form of yardstick to measure our progress against it is nearly impossible to determine whether we ought to celebrate victory or weep over failure.

A vision statement that is birthed out of seeking God in prayer and spending time waiting in His presence is worth its weight in gold. God has promised to bless His work when it is done His way. Knowing the will of God for our future and living faithfully and obediently toward it makes possible an experience of spiritual health and vitality that is not possible any other way. In knowing and doing the will of God we are personally blessed and we become a blessing as well. That is a marvelous way to live a life of purpose and meaning for His glory.

Dan Harrison  
C.E. Chairman



### PROJECT C TRIP

Project C is planning a trip to visit a current leader and his church. We will be visiting Dr. Wayne Schmidt in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Dr. Schmidt is Senior Pastor of Kentwood Community Wesleyan Church. He is also the author of a recent book titled "Leading While God Is Moving".

The date of this trip is May 15th and 16th. The cost will be \$65 per person. This includes bus trip, overnight accommodations and sessions with Dr. Schmidt.

We will be leaving Columbus, Ohio at 10:30 a.m. Thursday, May 15 and returning 6:30 p.m. Friday May 16. Seating will be on a first come, first serve basis. The bus accommodates only 40 individuals.

Project C, a committee of the General Christian Education Board committed to providing leadership growth opportunities, is sponsoring and partially underwriting this trip.

For more information please contact Herschel Holley (937)323-4086.

### THE FIRST ANNUAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION APPRECIATION DINNER WAS A HUGE SUCCESS!



On March 15, 1997 the first ever Christian Education Appreciation Banquet and Concert was held at Heritage Memorial Church in Washington Court House, Ohio. The Christian Education Dept. wanted to honor our Sunday School teachers and Children's Workers that they are appreciated and we wanted to encourage and uplift them.

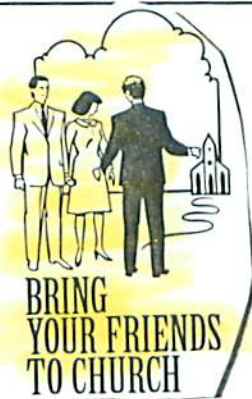
The evening began with a catered banquet. The meal had 300 people in attendance representing 20 churches. The singing for the banquet was done by the Celebration Singers from Winchester, Ohio. The keynote speaker at the banquet was Don Bartlette Ph.D., a Native American who was born with severe physical disabilities, and was rejected by his family, his community and the seven churches in the community. As a young child he was not allowed to attend school because he could not talk and was thought to be mentally disabled. He related his experiences of how Christ had changed his life through the workings and love of a woman who accepted him and showed him God through her life by taking him into her home. There was laughter and tears as he related his life experiences. Don has been a Sunday School teacher, Sunday School Superintendent and national speaker during his 25 years of ministry. At the conclusion of the speech, each was challenged to reach out to the "unlovely" and to change people one life at a time.

Kirk Talley continued the celebration by his uplifting concert. Kirk's music touched hearts and rang of praises to God. Kirk was joined by a 50 voice choir representing 5 churches.

At the conclusion of the service, Kirk had all the Sunday school teachers and workers to come on stage for a closing prayer. What a wonderful sight to see the vast number of teachers and workers covering the stage at Heritage. Rev. Dan Harrison, the CE Chairman, closed this amazing service with prayer for the teachers and workers and challenged us all to reach out to others.



Please mark your calendars for next year's Christian Education Appreciation Banquet and Concert on **March 14, 1998, 5:00 pm** for the banquet and **7:00 pm** for the concert.



## UNDERSTANDING EVANGELISM

Historically, the church has understood her role to bring the gospel to the unsaved and lost people of the earth. From the early church record in the book of Acts to the modern mission movement of today the work of evangelism has been seen as paramount in importance.

However, it is one thing to understand the work of evangelism from a historical and theoretical perspective and quite another to put into practical terms of how a local church or an individual believer can be involved in the process of actually leading men and women to Christ today.

Evangelism is one of the words that we as churches give much honor to in lip service with a little practice in daily life.

In order for any church to develop a church growth strategy the issue of evangelism must be prayerfully and seriously addressed. The issue is one that is not easily resolved or quickly addressed because of a rapidly changing culture. Ideas that worked well in other days begin to fade and new concepts must be employed. However, the basic principles of evangelism will never change.

The church must develop a harvest theology before there can be effective and sustained evangelistic activity. Harvest theology recognizes that people apart from Christ are lost.

An effective church evangelism strategy must include the following components:

**1. Church life evangelistic emphasis.** We must build evangelism into the total life of the church and in every part of the Body, Sunday services, Sunday School, youth services, children's activities must have a deep heart throb to win the lost to Christ.

**2. Church revivals and crusades.** Revivals has been highly successful tool for the church during the last forty years. However, unless our revival efforts result in the winning of the lost it can become ingrown and not effective. Perhaps a better concept would be to sponsor an evangelistic crusade each year for the express purpose of winning the unsaved.

**3. Church outreach events.** These events could include banquets, luncheons, outings, breakfasts, activities, concerts, fellowships, Bibles studies, films, and programs. In order to be effective a few concepts must be kept in mind:

a. "The purpose of these events in outreach. Every Christian needs to invite non-Christians to come with him or her.

b. The atmosphere is low-key. We want people to relax and enjoy the event."

c. The goal is to offer to the non-believer a "safe place" to be exposed to the gospel. "The unchurched will come back to a church that feels safe. For them, this is the most important ingredient. If they don't feel safe with you, they will not stay around long enough to hear the truth. You can do several things to make you and your church feel safe to the unchurched:

- \* Explain what you mean
- \* Don't rush people
- \* Don't be surprised by problems
- \* Give non-threatening invitations.

### 4. Church believes in one on one evangelism.

After all the other events are taken into consideration the one on one sharing of the gospel is by far the most productive and most effective. "We believe that every believer needs to know how to bring another person to a point of decision and commitment to Christ."

## Evangelism

EVANGELISM simply means the spreading of the gospel. It is that activity of the Christian church by which it seeks to bring those not turned to the love of God under the influence of the gospel message and to win and keep lost souls for Christ.

—St. Matthew Lutheran Church  
Itasca, IL



## UNDERSTANDING CHURCH GROWTH

The term "church growth" has been in evangelical circles for more than twenty years. The term itself evokes different reactions by different people. Over the last decade, for some, church growth has carried a negative connotation. The term seems to be identified with man-made gimmicks and problems brought on by growth.

For those who struggle with a church growth emphasis there seems to be two basic fears. One is the fear of change, which is very real to some. The other is the fear of an absence of spiritual depth. Both of these fears combine to make it seem unnecessary for the church to give serious attention to developing a strategy for growth. However, if a proper understanding of the concept and principles involved can be achieved then the church can be liberated to pursue the lofty objective of building a growing church. Church growth, rightly defined, is "the balanced increase in quantity, quality, and organizational structure of the church."<sup>1</sup> A proper concept of church growth is to see the church grow spiritually, organizationally, and numerically. As such, we must realize that church growth is not inconsistent with scripture.<sup>2</sup> In fact, in the book of Acts on at least twelve different occasions the growth of the early church was a stated fact.

The growth of the church in the book of Acts came about as the early disciples sought to fulfill the Great Commission in their generation. The church took seriously this last command of Christ when He said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, into all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."<sup>3</sup>

The influence of the Great Commission is very plain. The work of the church is to make disciples within every segment of our world's population. It is God's eternal purpose that all men have the opportunity to believe and to be saved. In order to make this possible the church must give herself to the task of "establishing a congregation of the redeemed in every community, in every neighborhood, of every class and condition of people is what our Father has sent us to do."<sup>4</sup>

In response to the Great Commission, growing churches have developed some deep seated convictions: "It is God's will that His church grow and that His lost children be found,"<sup>5</sup> and there must be "a conviction permeating the body of Christ that God's will for the church is to grow."<sup>6</sup>

---

---

### A good friend

---

---

It is of practical value to learn to like yourself. Since you must spend so much time with yourself, you might as well get some satisfaction out of the relationship.

—Norman Vincent Peale

Out of these deep seated beliefs comes an attitude that reflects church growth philosophy. This attitude could be defined as: "A developed characteristic of an individual and church who have achieved a sensitivity to seeing the possibility for growth and applying appropriate strategies to gain maximum results for Christ and His church."<sup>7</sup>

Church growth philosophy is built upon a premise of biblical teaching. There are eight great precepts upon which church growth philosophy is based:

1. The Bible must be accepted as the inspired Word of God.
2. The Bible teaches that people outside of Christ are lost.
3. The Bible teaches that God's love is for all people.
4. The Bible teaches that Christ is the only way to the Father and to heaven.
5. The Bible teaches that the church must be filled with and obedient to the Holy Spirit.
6. The Bible teaches that we must pray specifically for the growth of the church
7. The Bible teaches that the church is the Body of Christ.
8. The Bible teaches that God's eternal purpose is to save all who will believe and that He is not willing that any should perish.<sup>8</sup>

As the church accepts these eight precepts a foundation is established to begin to consider the reality of church growth principles.

David Dean  
Brookside Church

---

---

### A mother's prayer

---

---

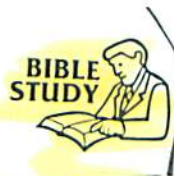
Make my children sweet, Lord,  
In thy tender loving eyes;  
Keep them ever healthy  
And please, Lord, make them wise.

Make them kind and gentle, Lord,  
Toward others round about;  
Place within them faith in thee;  
Never let them doubt.

Make my children patient, Lord.  
Let them always share  
The blessings you have given them  
With those in need of care.

Give them tender loving hearts  
As the great love sent from thee;  
Make them happy, filled with joy,  
And always let them thankful be.

—Ruth H. Underhill



## UNDERSTANDING HOW NEW PEOPLE FIT IN

A church can be ever so effective in the areas of evangelism and discipleship and yet still not grow if the process of helping new people to actually become a part of the church body is neglected.

This process has been called assimilation by those involved in church growth thinking. "Evangelism provides a constant flow of new converts and potential disciples. These new disciples must be effectively incorporated into the life of the body and into its activities. An attitude and structure must exist in the church so new people can be easily absorbed into its life."

The process of assimilation is made up of two basic dimensions. The first dimension in the process of assimilation is that of attitude.

*Effective absorption will depend on how easy it is to become part of a congregation. Assimilation occurs when a person develops a strong sense of identity within the church. A person must sense that he belongs here and that he is comfortable with the teacher, organization, goals, and purpose of the church.*

People can sense immediately if the attitude of the church is open and receptive or whether it is closed and restricted. Mechanical attempts to project an attitude of openness will fail unless the heart is truly open.

The first step in devising a strategy for assimilation is to begin with the leadership and continue through the membership and teach the necessity of having a heart that truly desires and seeks for new believers to be a part of the body. Unless this is done all other efforts will fail.

The second dimension in assimilation is structure.

**There must be a process by which people can be contacted and invited to appropriate activities within the body. Are people quickly contacted and welcomed to the church after the initial visit? When a persons evidences a genuine interest in the church is it easy for him and his family to be involved?**

There are five avenues through which new people become assimilated into a body of believers:

1. The ability to establish relationships or friendships with a few people in the church.



2. Help new people understand what the church is about. This is best accomplished by developing a discovery class taught by the pastor to introduce the church to those who are in the process of making a decision about church.
3. Be sure of the new person's spiritual commitment to Christ.
4. Help the new person discover his/her own spiritual gifts.
5. The fifth and final step is to involve the new person in the ministry of the church. "Ministry involvement, real ministry involvement, is a key to assimilation."

When a new person has developed friendships within the church, understands his/her own spiritual gifts, and has a specific role in the church, assimilation has taken place!

David Dean  
Brookside Church

## THE WORLD NEEDS MEN...

who cannot be bought;  
whose word is their bond;  
who put character above wealth;  
who possess opinions and a will;  
who are larger than their vocations'  
who do not hesitate to take chances;  
who will not lose their individuality in a crowd;  
who will be as honest in small things as in great things;  
who will made no compromise with wrong;  
whose ambitions are not confined to their own selfish desires;  
who will not say they do it "because everybody else does it",  
who are turn to their friends through good report and evil report, in adversity as well as in prosperity;  
who do not believe that shrewdness, sunning, and hardheadedness are the best qualities for winning success;  
who are not ashamed or afraid to stand for the truth when it is unpopular;  
who can say "no" with emphasis, although all the rest of the world says "yes."



Once you've decided to live differently, let God be your guide and hang tough--follow your dreams with determination. Before you know it you'll be soaring like an eagle.

*Taken from The Making of a Christian Leader by Ted W. Engstrom.*

CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHRISTIAN UNION  
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
P.O. BOX 356  
WINCHESTER, OHIO 45697  
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Permit # 2  
Winchester, Ohio

I am humbled to even be asked to write this article on church growth. When they asked me to, my mind started racing and wondering what I could say.

All of my thoughts must be based on Psalm 127:1, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. (NKJV)" I often wonder aloud to the Lord, "Why did you pick us?" I know I am no more qualified than the next person. I also know that there are pastors who work much harder than I do. I want to thank God for His help in the Denton church.

I do believe that the turning point came on Easter Sunday, 1994. Our church had been declining in numbers for several years. This decline crossed the ministry of several pastors, so no pastor was to blame. That decline continued into my ministry, and became a great concern to me. I began to pray about what to do. A pastor friend of mine gave me an idea. It involved the people buying into the fact that they were the key to building the church. They were to invite someone to Easter service, turn in their name and address to me, then call them the night before Easter. I would, in the meantime, send a personal letter inviting them to join us. It was a huge success. We had 86 there. To some of you that isn't many, but to us, who were averaging in the 40s, it was great! As my people understood their role in

church growth, excitement started to build.

Since then, through Model Church Seminar and other seminars I have attended, I have continued to learn and teach the importance of the people being workers. The laypeople must understand that they are the key to church growth. If they don't, the pastor will be expected to do it all. This, unfortunately, has been the mind-set of churches for years.

I have started a leadership training class. This takes my leadership gifted people and trains them in leadership skills. I am using the Model Church material for much of it.

I am excited about what God is doing in Denton. We are seeing new people come to church, people saved, and people growing in grace. We are averaging in the 80s. Each service I wonder what is going to happen.

Yes, we have the same trails as other churches. But God is helping us! For that I am thankful!

Pastor Timothy Mateer  
Denton, Maryland CCCU

