

T.E.A.C.H.

What Do We Do Now? Dan Harrison

Christian
Education
Department

Volume 7, Issue 4

Oct., Nov. and Dec.

Sunday School and worship have reversed roles over the last 25 years. Morning worship now is as much bigger than Sunday school as the Sunday school was larger than worship 25 years ago. Worship is now the normal entry point and Sunday school the normal next step toward assimilation. Because things have changed so drastically we need to rethink what we are trying to get done through the venue of Sunday School.

Over the last 25 years the worship service has assumed the old role of the Sunday school. It is now the "first step" or entry-level religious experience of most who will come to our churches. So what about the Sunday school today? If Sunday school has lost its old mission which was outreach, what is to be its new mission?

It seems to me that Sunday School is perfectly suited to help us get people more deeply into personal spiritual formation and to also provide for us a vehicle of assimilation into the life of the church. Since the Sunday worship morning service gets people to take the first step now, the Sunday school should provide the second step. Sunday school should offer a stronger call for commitment, a more serious call of holy living. Sunday school must now do what the morning service used to do —

challenge people to deeper commitment.

How does the Sunday School do this? How do we help people grow in holiness? How can Sunday school help get people "more committed" to God and the church?

Several years ago Keith Drury offered a model for Sunday School that I think fit well then and fits even better now. His suggestion was to organize classes — especially new classes — with **half the time dedicated to caring-sharing-praying**. The first half of every Sunday school class is dedicated to helping people minister to each other — this creates an atmosphere where people grow and change. This "Support group strategy" creates a loving-caring community which will readily assimilate the "First-steppers."

What Drury had in mind was something like John Wesley's "Class meetings" or the old "Cottage prayer meetings" of years ago. Opportunities for people to share felt needs and then have people they knew and trusted lay hands on them and lift the needs to God in prayer. This is the kind of high-touch people crave in our impersonal world today.

Sunday school classes must become places of spiritual intimacy and reciprocal ministry. Sunday school classrooms are great places for people to pray, share, and minister to

Inside this issue:

What If?	2
Helping Newcomers Connect, Grow & Stay	3
Care Ministry @ Faith Memorial	5
Care Ministry @ Crossroads	6

continued from page 1

each other. A shift toward Sunday school classes becoming caring centers and not just teaching centers is long overdue in my opinion.

But teaching isn't out the window. The last half of class should be a solid "Convictional Bible study." We teachers must learn to teach for life change — not just cram information into the heads of our students. Education without transformation simply produces smarter sinners. The teacher must call for a decision to respond to the truth that has been presented. They must teach for decision in regard to making a deeper commitment.



If greater commitment is expected, somewhere along the line the "call" for commitment must be made. Simply studying what Christ-likeness is, won't make Christ-like people. To know is not to do. Classes must offer a tender loving call to change — an "altar call" of sorts. In the weeks that follow people who have experienced life change need to be encouraged to testify about how God has changed them.

The reversal of Sunday school and worship has given the Sunday school a new mission. It is to recruit into our classes the thousands of one-hour-only individuals who now attend worship. We must organize our classes in a way that allows people to get in touch with one another and to also study the Word together in a way that allows them to help each other become more like Jesus. This is the mission of the Sunday school.

The secret to effective Sunday schools today is not to get back to what we did in the past; but it is in moving forward to what we need to do in the future. It is helping people take a bigger step toward deeper commitment to God and holy living and a more loving, engaged relational commitment to one another.

The greatest days for Sunday School are those coming up if we make the right changes now and get busy responding to the felt needs of the people God is bringing our way through our worship services.

What If ????

Bill Voss, Crossroads Church



Have you ever played this little game, pretending you were someone else or someplace else? Perhaps you were an airplane, running into the wind and soaring into the sky like a bird. Or perhaps you were a doctor or nurse administering just the correct medicine at just the right time. Could be that it was a very harmless pretending game as a child but let's get more serious.

What If -

you were lonely
had just lost a spouse
had just lost a child
going through a divorce
had just lost your job
you were spiritually lost
or were experiencing any one of the many other tragic situations of this life.

And What If -

You thought perhaps, someone at the church will care enough to offer me some help. So for the first Sunday in a long time you venture into church.

And When You Get There -

You were greeted at the door, given a bulletin and you find your way into the sanctuary. At the close of the service perhaps you were again greeted with the statement 'We are so glad to have you this morning'.

What would be your reaction, would you be back next Sunday? Not very likely according to the statistics and it may be years before you try going to church again.

Now let's make one change and send this individual to a church that has a team of believers that have been trained by Care Ministries International to properly show the love of God to everyone that comes to their church.

Now What If -

You have the same problem

And What If -

You venture, this time into the Care Ministry church with the same hope, that someone may care enough to offer you some help.

(continued from page 2)

And When You Get There—

You were greeted in much the same way, but from there all things are different, in fact you may have been greeted outside the church by someone who helped you find a parking spot or opened the church door.

Following the greeting you were met, and greeted again by someone who introduced themselves and then escorted you to your destination. Perhaps that was a Sunday school class, or



if you have children you were shown exactly where to take them so you would know they were well cared for. Then upon arriving at your destination they offered to pray with you about a situation or two that came up in your visiting. Wow, and church hasn't even started yet. At this time, you were given a

prayer request form to fill out. Are you beginning to feel like these people are truly interested in helping you find a solution to your life's problems?

After the service you were wondering what else can happen when you notice, here is your new friend. They are inviting you to come with them to a reception for refreshments and to meet the Senior Pastor. Along the way you are introduced to several other people. Then at the reception you meet other people who are also attending this church for the first time. At this reception you meet still more people who seem to have a genuine interest in getting to know you. Of course you will have met several of the pastors and the Senior Pastor who has had prayer with you about issues that you have shared with him.

Now, what will you be thinking as you leave this church? Yes, I believe there is help for me here and yes, I will be back. If not convinced by the time you leave I am confident that you will be by the end of the week. By that time you will have received a gift dropped off at your front door, several items in the mail and a couple of phone calls to help assure you that the people of this church truly do love you. Could it be the love of God?

Which of the above 'what ifs', fit your church. If you are not happy with where you fit I would suggest that you check out Care International at www.caremin.org.

Helping Newcomers Connect, Grow, and Stay David Durey

Pick three new Christians who become successfully assimilated into your church during the last year or two. Imagine that you had a long conversation with them, asking how they were drawn to the church and why they stayed. Now repeat the same process in more than a dozen growing churches across your city, speaking also with a pastor at each church to gain additional perspective.



If you had time for this extensive research, what would you learn? Chances are that you'd see certain patterns emerge. You'd become convinced of specific actions you could take to improve the way your congregation attracts the unchurched in your community and assimilates into the Body of Christ.

Too Many People Don't Come Back

In his book *The Purpose Driven Church*, Rick Warren says, "Assimilation is the task of moving people from an awareness of your church, to attendance at your church, to active membership in your church." "I want to learn how to do a better job of just that—helping people find the most important relationships in the world: with Jesus Christ and with the body of Christ.

For my Doctor of Ministry dissertation, I received permission to work with fifteen Portland-area churches that have a solid track record of successfully assimilated new converts. I then spoke extensively with forty-five new Christians (three each in fifteen churches) and with fifteen senior or associate pastors (one per church).

After analyzing all the data, I grouped the findings into three areas, personal relationships, internationality, and small groups. First personal relationships were the most significant reason why unchurched people were attracted to and stayed in the church. Second, these churches were intentional in reaching lost people, welcoming visitors, and providing a pathway for spiritual formation. Finally, the data showed the practice of helping new people form significant relationships and grow spiritually.

Personal Invitations Carry the Day

When asked, "What attracted you to this church?" over 70 percent of the new Christians interviewed responded by saying they had received a personal invitation. Just as Andrew went out, found his brother Simon Peter, and

(continued from page 3)

invited him to come and see Jesus (John 1:40-42), so the people I interviewed said someone they knew and trusted had personally invited them to church. One of the pastors I interviewed explained, "Our people are our tool for evangelizing." What God has done in their lives is an example for the people that they are around in families, in neighborhoods, and in the workplace. Our members either extend an invitation to their unchurched friends or these friends visit our services because of what they see the Lord has done in our members' lives.

Most people become Christians and enter the church through webs of *relationships*—common kinship, common friendship, and common association.



Growing Churches Create Intentional Pathways for Growth

All churches in the study provide specific ministries to assist in the spiritual growth of newcomers and members, most of them using small groups as a primary tool for helping disciples grow. Eight churches acknowledged adult education as a significant ministry for Christian maturation. One-on-one discipleship was also mentioned. The new Christian interviewed verified that all of the ministries helped with spiritual growth, along with preaching and corporate worship. Whatever the format, a majority of the churches indicated that they had created a specific pathway for spiritual growth, most offering this formation pathway in the form of seminars or classes.

People Stay Because of Meaningful Relationships

When asked, "Why did you stay in this church?" over 77 percent of those responded in the combined categories of friendliness and caring, new relationships, or small group involvement. Fifty-three percent of the responses specifically indicated the importance of the church's being friendly and caring. One new Christian said, "I think I've stayed because of the love that they have showed me and that they have cared."

Practical Applications

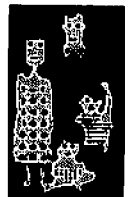
Through the research, analysis, reflection, and writing, a number of practical applications continued to surface. Two relate to attraction and outreach while the other two focus on assimilation.

1. **Encourage Personal Invitations.** Churches need to provide opportunities and encouragement for members to extend personal invitations. According to Lutheran

historian Martin Marty, one concept defines the difference between churches that grow and those that do not: Are they inviting others to join them?

Church leaders must instill this as a value in their people. Leaders cannot rely on visibility of their church facilities or great preaching as their primary means of attraction. Churches grow when those who attend invite friends, relatives, and acquaintances who are not connected with a church. Wise leaders create events, ministries, and activities about which their members feel excited and to which they want to invite their unchurched friends. Worship services in "inviting" congregations are also high quality and seeker friendly so members know they can be enthusiastic in encouraging friends to attend.

One congregation in the study provides a particularly good example of an inviting church. They offer a lot of bridge-in events throughout the year, such as drama presentations, a mother-daughter tea, and a public-garden tour. Also, "every weekend service we present the gospel, states one of the pastors of that congregation, "So, we encourage people to bring their friends. We try to work primarily through networks of relationships...they know that it is a safe place to bring their unchurched friends."



2. **Equip Members for Personal Evangelism and Follow-up.** Many of the churches studied equip members and lay leaders alike with tools they can use

to share the gospel on a person-to-person basis. One of the pastors I studied regularly concludes his sermons with an explanation of how to become a Christian. Yet that's still no substitute for one-on-one discussions, he says. "I've found that a lot of people don't get it until someone sits down with them personally and says, 'here's what the Bible says about how you can know for sure that you are going to heaven, how you can be forgiven, and how to be saved,'" he concludes. One church used an "altar call" for inviting people to make a public commitment to Jesus Christ. It then has altar workers available to pray with people who respond to the invitation to accept Christ. Each altar worker who prays with the new converts continues one-on-one follow-up with them for at least three weeks or until they get connected in a cell group. The goal is that within that three weeks, new converts will cover three simple booklets with the disciple and begin attending a cell group.

3. **Emphasize a Small-Group Formation Path.** Rick Warren states that "believers grow faster when you

(continued from page 4)

provide a track for them to grow on "(from *The Purpose Driven Church*). He also acknowledges that Christians need relationships in order to grow and that believers develop best in the context of fellowship.

4. **Update Your Membership Class.** Finally, churches should provide a membership class that will both spell out the expectations of a fully assimilated member and help build new relationships. The research in this study indicated that these churches had essentially the same expectations of new members as they did for those they considered to be fully assimilated in the church. They help newcomers evaluate if they want to continue to associate with the church, and they project what newcomers can anticipate for their future involvement within church.



Full Assimilation Involves Making New Ministers

What does it look like when someone is fully assimilated? The most widespread answer involved moving the newcomers from membership into ministry; active involvement in serving and reaching out to others.

Care Ministry at Faith Memorial Church
Mark Linn, Admin. Pastor

Reprinted by permission.

Care Ministry began at Faith Ministry church in January of this year. We began the year with a team of 43 people who were passionate about reaching out to first time attendees at our church. The first Sunday we did Care Ministry we had three groups of first time attendees. One of those groups consisted of a woman and her child. She was having personal problems and wanted us to pray for her. We prayed for her following morning worship at our hospitality table. The following evening a couple of people from the Care Ministry dropped off some cookies to their home. A person on the Care team shared the plan of salvation with the lady and her children. All three of them accepted Christ that night.

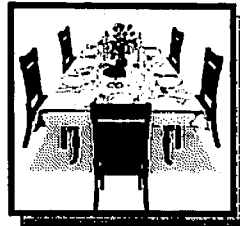
There was another family who attended our church for the first time in the spring of this year. In the following weeks they were invited to attend a small group meeting and did so.

They eventually started attending Sunday school and joined the choir. At the moment they are involved with a group of people that have felt called by God to plant a church.

As I write this article, we have assimilated thirty-eight percent of our first time attendees into a Sunday school class, a small group, or an area of ministry. We have forty-two new people involved in ministry since January. God has blessed Faith Memorial church as we "intentionally" care for people who come to our church with a need to know that someone loves them and someone cares.

Mark Your Calendars!!!!

Teacher Appreciation Banquet



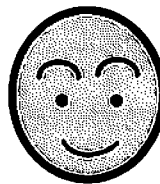
March 15, 2003

at

Heritage Memorial
Washington Court House, Ohio
Details to Come Soon!

Smile!

I LOVE TO WORK with wood and decided to carve a rocking horse for our unborn grandchild. As parts of the horse were shaped, my intentions became clear to my next-door neighbor. "You must be about to have a grandchild," he called over to me. "Our first," I replied, beaming. "I have six," he went on. "After the first three you'll buy something plastic at K Mart."



Christian Education Department

Christian Education Department
P.O. Box 356
Winchester, Ohio 45697

Phone: (937) 695-0655
Fax: (937) 695-0388
e-mail: cedept@dragonbbs.com
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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



Care Ministry at Crossroads Church
Pastor Paul Elswick, Crossroads Church

On October 28, 2001 we opened our new facilities with great anticipation of what God was going to do. We thought we were prepared to handle the FTA's (First Time Attendees) as we opened the doors. Opening day we seated seven hundred eighty people in the sanctuary, as we were averaging three hundred forty at the time of opening. As for the month of September 2002 the average for the month is five hundred thirty-seven. Care Ministry has been the ministry we were looking for to integrate the FTA's into the church family and see a spirit of unity within the body. In the last month we have had three new people come through the front door, they were then led by Care Minister into the reception room and later forward to make a public confession of faith. We at Crossroads would not be where we are today if it wasn't for Care Ministry. In thirty years of ministry, I have never seen ministry produce such results in helping people find their place of ministry in the church.



What's new in the Library

VIDEO 1

Christianity: Boring,
Untrue and Irrelevant?
Who Is Jesus?
Why Did Jesus Die?

VIDEO 2

How Can I Be Sure of My Faith?
Why and How Should I Read the Bible?
Why and How Do I Pray?

VIDEO 3

How Does God Guide Us?
Who Is the Holy Spirit?
What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

VIDEO 4

How Can I Be Filled with the Spirit?
How Can I resist Evil ?
Why and How Should We Tell Others?

VIDEO 5

Does God Heal Today?
What About Church?
How Can I Make the Most
of the Rest of My Life?