



VISIONS



CBF/GA Fall Convocation

GROWING CHURCHES

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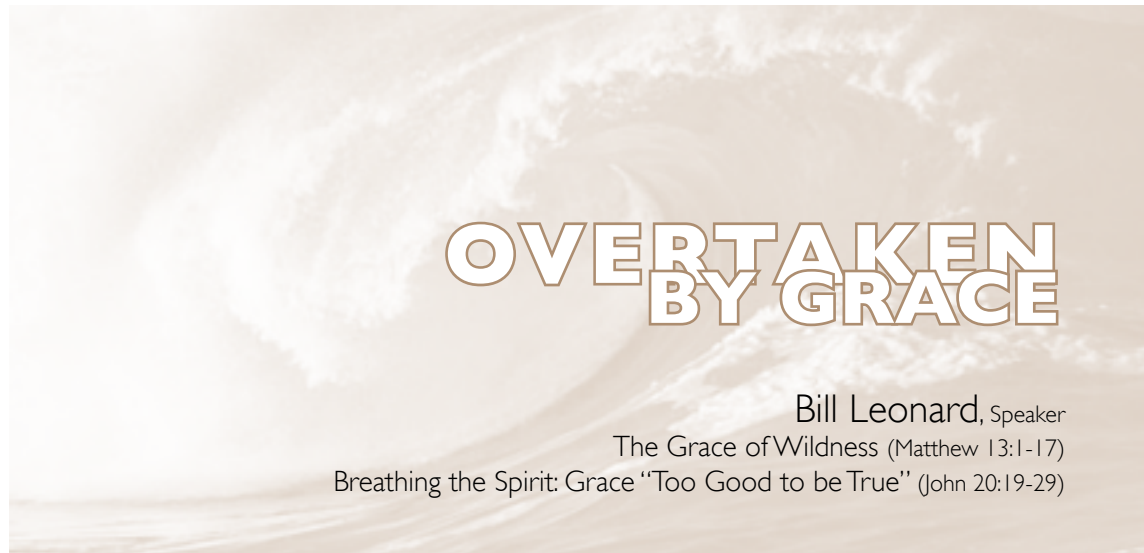
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OVERTAKEN BY GRACE

Bill Leonard, Speaker

The Grace of Wildness (Matthew 13:1-17)

Breathing the Spirit: Grace "Too Good to be True" (John 20:19-29)

Dates/Times (tentative)

November 9 & 10

SUNDAY

4:00 p.m. Coordinating Council
5:30 p.m. Food and Fellowship
6:45 p.m. Pre-Service Music
7:00 p.m. Worship
Matthew 13:1-17
The Grace of Wildness
8:30 p.m. Dessert Reception and Book Signing

MONDAY

7:30 a.m. Baptist Heritage Council Breakfast
9:00 a.m. Strategic Planning Feedback Groups
10:00 a.m. Break and Book Signing
10:30 a.m. Worship
John 20: 19-29
Breathing the Spirit:
Grace "Too Good to be True"
11:45 a.m. Lunch (*See bottom of page 6 for registration and ticket information.*)

Location

First Baptist Church, Augusta, GA
3500 Walton Way (physical address)
P.O. Box 14489 (mailing address)
Augusta, GA 30919-0489
706-733-2236
<http://fbcaugusta.org/>

Childcare

Please contact Becca Jones, Minister to Preschool and Children, to make reservations for childcare by October 1. She can be contacted at rjones@fbcaugusta.org or 706-733-2236, ext. 222. Please be ready to tell children's ages and what sessions they will be attending.

A map of the FBC Augusta campus can be found at <http://www1.fbcaugusta.org/visitorpage/fbcmmap.jpg>.

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Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia

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VISIONS is published six times a year by CBF/GA. All questions and comments may be directed to ElizaBeth Copeland, 478-742-1191 ext 23 or ecopeland@cbfga.org.

Directions to FBC-Augusta

From Atlanta: Take Interstate 20 East from Atlanta to Augusta. Take Exit 195 (Wheeler Road) and turn right. Stay on Wheeler Road for approximately three miles. At the intersection with Walton Way Extension, turn right. First Baptist Church is located on the right.

From Columbia, SC: Take Interstate 20 West from Columbia to Augusta. Take Exit 196-A onto Bobby Jones Expressway—Interstate 520 East. Take the first exit, Wheeler Road, and turn right. Stay on Wheeler Road for approximately eight-tenths of a mile. Turn right at the intersection with Walton Way Extension. First Baptist Church is located on the right.

From South Georgia via Highways GA 56, US 25, US 1, or US 278: From any of these highways, take the Bobby Jones Expressway—Interstate 520 West. Take the Wheeler Road exit and turn right. Stay on Wheeler Road for approximately six-tenths of a mile. Turn right at the intersection with Walton Way Extension. First Baptist Church is located on the right.

From Locations in North Georgia: Once arriving in the Augusta area (which includes Richmond and Columbia counties) go to Interstate 20 and follow the directions from Atlanta or Columbia, depending on your direction on the interstate.

Hotel Information

The Partridge Inn, 2110 Walton Way #105, Augusta, GA 30904
706-737-8888 (phone), www.partridgeinn.com (website)

To make reservations online, visit www.partridgeinn.com, then click reservations, then group, this will take you to the attendee code section where you type in “CBFGA” (no quotes).

Cut off date: Friday, October 17, 2008

Rate: \$99.00 per night

Doubletree Hotel, 2651 Perimeter Parkway, Augusta, GA 30909
706-855-8100 (phone), 706-860-1720 (fax), www.doubletree.com (website)

Group code is CBF.

Cut off date: Saturday, October 11, 2008

Rate: \$109.00 per night

Speaker

Bill J. Leonard, Dean of the Divinity School and Professor of Church History, Wake Forest University, Winston Salem, NC, leonabj@wfu.edu

Dr. Leonard has held teaching posts at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Samford University, and Seinan Gakuin University (Fukuoka, Japan). Leonard holds the B.A. from Texas Wesleyan College, the M.Div. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and the Ph.D. from Boston University. He is the author or editor of fifteen books, including *A Dictionary of Baptists in America*, *Christianity in Appalachia: Profiles in Regional Pluralism*, and *Baptist Ways: A History, a survey of Baptist history from 1600 to 2000* (Judson Press 2003). His most recent book is entitled *Baptists in America*, published by Columbia University Press (2005).

His spouse, Candyce Crew Leonard, is a professor in humanities at Wake Forest. They have one daughter, Stephanie, and are members at First Baptist Church, Highland Avenue in Winston-Salem. CBF/GA





commonalities of Growing Congregations

Frank Broome, CBF/GA Coordinator, fbroome@cbfga.org



For the past thirty years, I have been paying attention to the literature on church growth. I have read just about everything I could get my hands on and taught conferences and consulted with churches along the way. Yet I have never been that satisfied with much of what I have read. I just felt that much of it was either not honest at worst or just naïve at best. A couple of months ago I ran across a comprehensive study about growth and decline that I think is worth the read though. A consortium of faith communities known as the Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnership did it. The study is called FACTs on Growth and is based on the Faith Communities Today 2005 national survey of over fourteen thousand congregations. The groups involved are affiliated with the Hartford Institute for Religion Research at Hartford Seminary. Leaders in the study were C. Kirk Hadaway, David Roozen, and Debra Beleski Brown. The study can be found on the web at <http://fact.hartsem.edu/>.

The study focused on substantial numerical growth. It was written so as to answer the question, “What are the most common characteristics of growing congregations?” Following is a brief summary of the report.

There is some good news and some bad news in this study for our congregations. Most of our congregations are not in suburbia, they have a majority of older members, and they find it difficult to make the changes necessary for growth. On the other hand, they are full of individuals who are committed to Christ and accepting of others. These individuals give sacrificially and they desire that their congregation grow.

I hope you will look this study up on the web. I have received permission to use it for the benefit of our congregations and would be glad to lead your congregation in taking a closer look at it.

Location Churches located in suburbia are more likely to be growing than churches located elsewhere. Churches located in redeveloping urban areas are the second fastest growing geographical group. Churches located in small towns, rural areas, or declining central cities are growing the least (Figure 1).

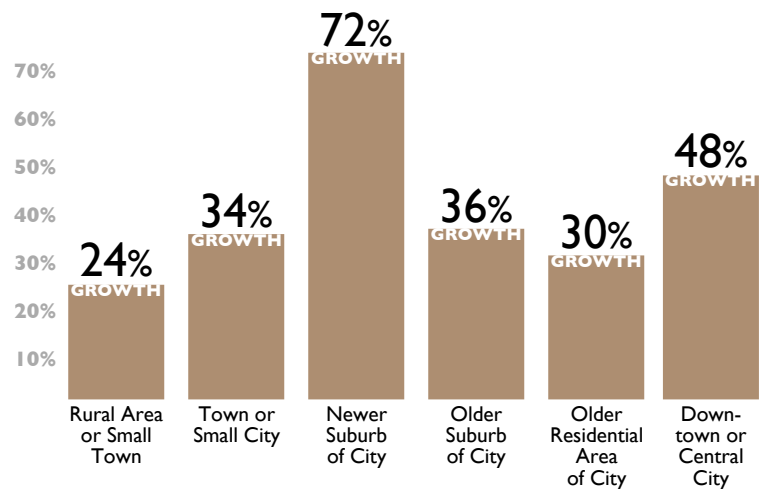


Figure 1 — Church Location and Growth ▶

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Younger congregations Churches established since 1975 have a better chance of growing. Churches formed before 1900 are the least likely to grow (Figure 2). Younger congregations tend to give more energy to growth, and they tend to be located in growing communities.

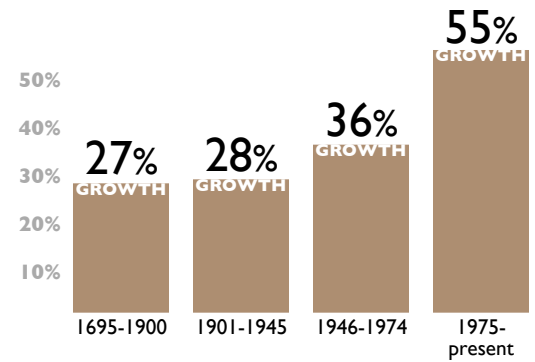
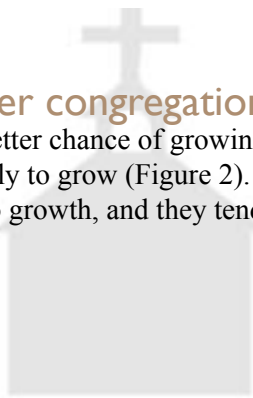
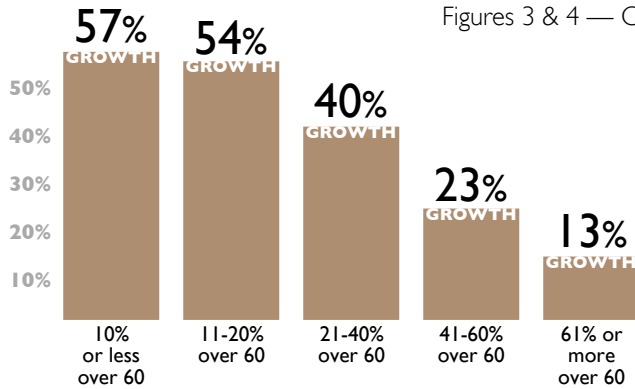
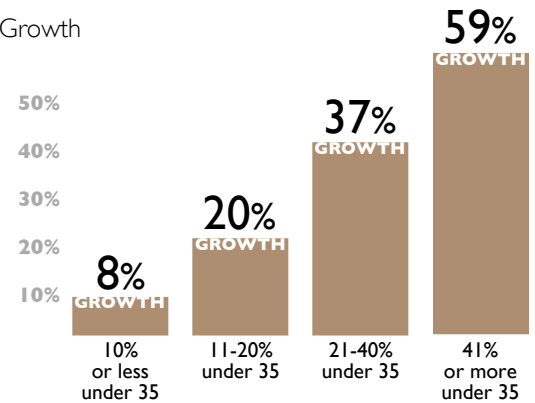


Figure 2 — Church Age and Growth ▶



Figures 3 & 4 — Church Member Ages and Growth



Age of the members Congregations where those over sixty years of age comprise less than twenty percent of the membership are growing (Figure 3). Conversely, if the majority of participating members are under thirty-five years of age, the congregation is likely to be growing (Figure 4). Such congregations tend to be more exciting, innovative, and flexible with stronger recruitment programs.

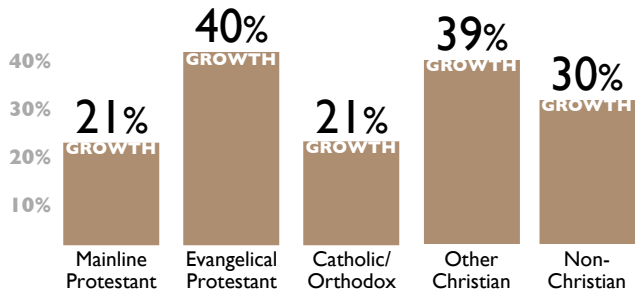


Figure 5 — Denomination and Growth

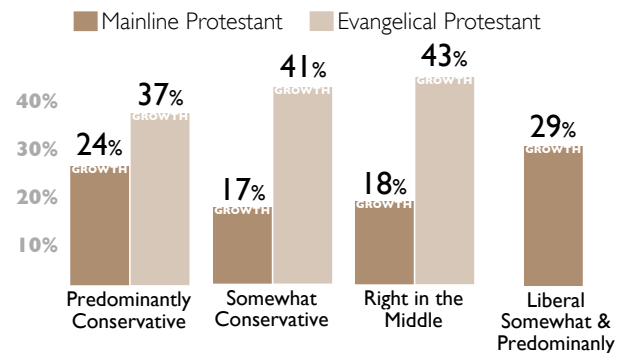
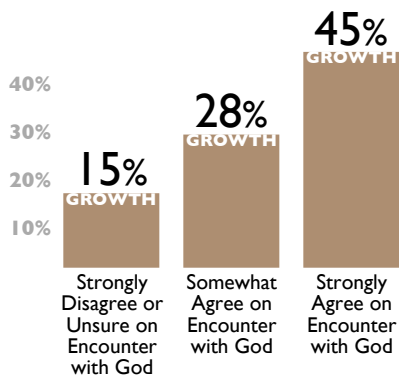


Figure 6 — Theological Orientation and Growth

Denomination and theological orientation Evangelical congregations are growing faster than mainline congregations (Figure 5). However, within Evangelical circles, it is the less conservative churches that are the most likely to grow (Figure 6). This runs counter to commonly accepted beliefs about theological orientation and church growth.



Spiritual vitality Churches where the members feel they are encountering God and not just part of an inward-looking social club are growing (Figure 7).

◀ Figure 7 — Church Members' Spiritual Vitality and Growth



Relationships between members Families within congregations need to be close but not too close. If families are “close knit,” they tend to exclude new members (Figure 8).

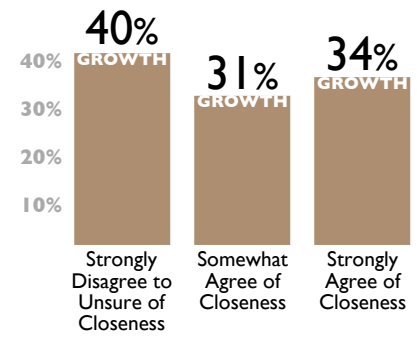
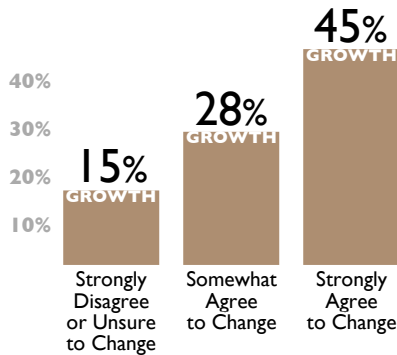


Figure 8 — Church Members' Closeness and Growth ▶



Willingness to change If the congregation is willing to change, it is more likely to grow (Figure 9). This willingness must be real and not just imagined.

◀ Figure 9 — Church Willingness to Change and Growth

Conflict Congregations with the least amount of conflict in the last few years are the most likely to grow (Figure 10). All congregations have some conflict, but major conflict hinders growth.

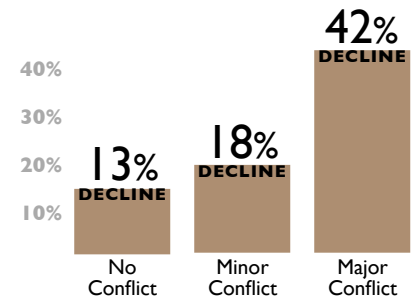
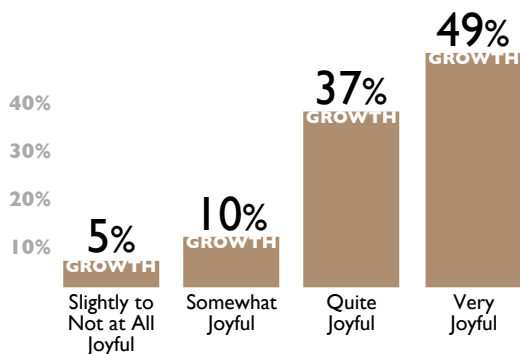
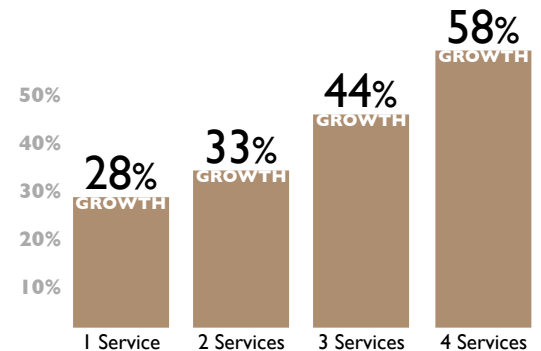


Figure 10 — Church Conflict and DECLINE ▶

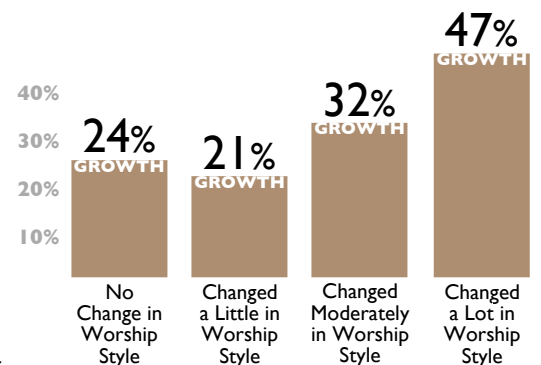
Worship Congregations with multiple worship services tend to grow faster than congregations with only one or two each week (Figure 11). The more “joyful” the worship experience is, the more likely the congregation is growing (Figure 12). Congregations that change their worship style occasionally tend to grow more than congregations that never change (Figure 13).

Figure 11 — Multiple Worship Services and Growth



◀ Figure 12 — Church Joyfulness and Growth

Figure 13 — Change in Worship Style and Growth ▶



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Children & Youth Churches grow when children and youth are both seen and heard in the major worship times (Figure 14).

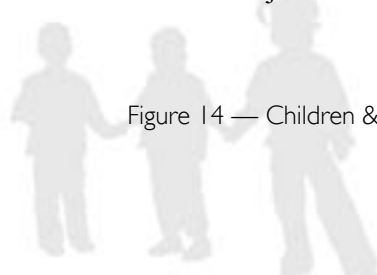
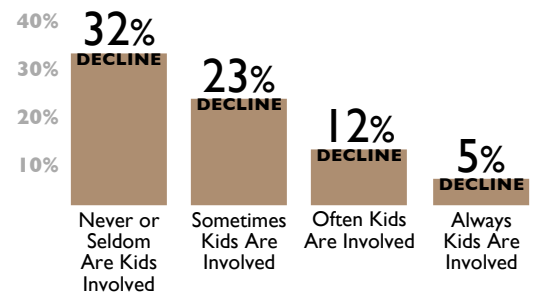
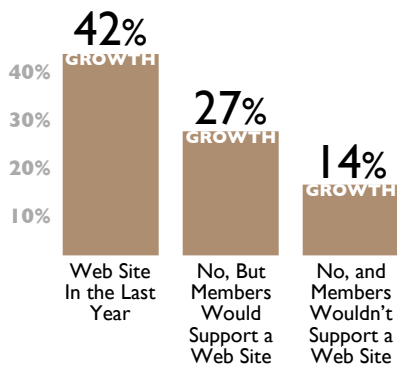
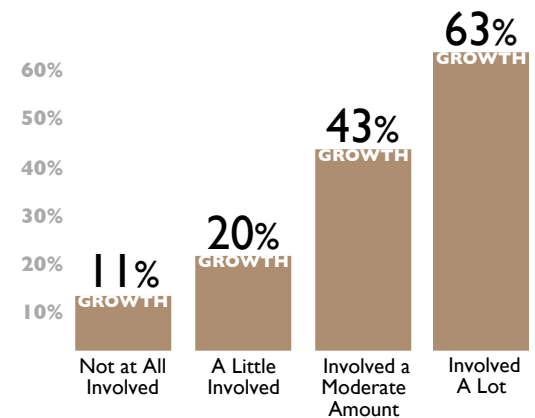
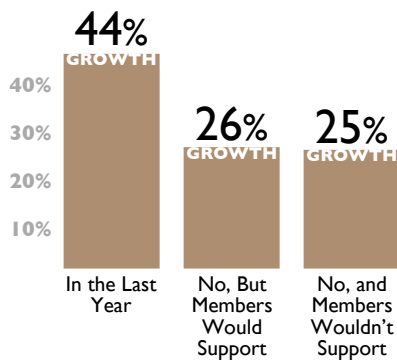


Figure 14 — Children & Youth Participation and DECLINE ▶



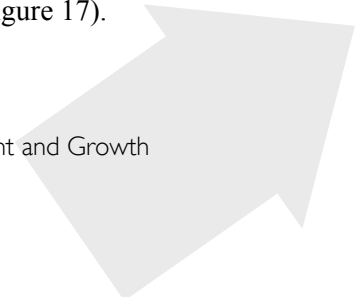
Recruitment plan (Figures 15 & 16) Simply wishing does not make a church grow. The church members have to be involved, and the congregation has to have a plan.

Figures 15 & 16 — Recruitment Planning, Involvement and Growth



Technology Attractive web sites and the use of electronic communication are essential tools for church growth (Figure 17).

◀ Figure 17 — Church Web Site Development and Growth



Let's Do Lunch! CBF/GA is hosting a luncheon at 11:45 a.m. on Monday, November 10 at the Fall Convocation.

Registration is required by October 29. Register by calling 478-742-1191, or online at www.cbfga.org. Tickets are \$10.00 and may be purchased several different ways:

1. You may send your personal check directly to CBF/GA at P.O. Box 4343, Macon, GA 31208.
2. Buy tickets at the door.
3. Buy your tickets online through our website.

For more information, contact Suzanne Powell at 478-742-1191, ext. 21 or spowell@cbfga.org.



Don't miss the fellowship!

Congregational Vitality

Jake Hall, jhall@heritagebaptistfellowship.com

Smaller congregations are sometimes paralyzed by seeing themselves as “small.” Yet, small churches forget they are small when they realize the God-sized mission to which they are called.

Congregational Growth in a Smaller Congregation

ON ANY GIVEN SUNDAY, when mega churches with mega budgets and mega memberships receive the majority of media attention, it could be easy for most members in the average congregation to feel motley and minuscule by comparison. Mega churches boast memberships in the thousands, parking lots by the acre, and volunteers by the battalion. Their models for ministry management sell in the millions. All of this popularity can lead pastors and lay people alike to believe that when it comes to the best practices for growing a congregation, the mega-church model is a one-size-fits-all strategy for growth.

Congregational Imagination

When we take our focus off the big churches and big steeples, we find that their experience is atypical and not easily reproduced in the average congregational context. Mega churches have mass appeal but they do not reflect the life of most congregations. According to a Barna research study, sixty percent of churches in America have ninety or fewer members present on any given Sunday. Only two percent of churches have more than one thousand in attendance.

Most churches aren’t mega churches and should not seek to model their community in the shadow or likeness of another. The small church mentality of scarcity is the first obstacle to growth. Living life out of a comparison with larger community can cause smaller churches to focus on what they can’t accomplish instead of focus on the meaningful work within their reach. Smaller congregations are sometimes paralyzed by seeing themselves as “small.” Yet, small churches forget they are small when they realize the God-sized mission to which they are called.

When small churches forget they are small, they dream big and accomplish much for the kingdom of God. The potential for growth in smaller congregations is constrained more by limits of imagination than by lack of money, members, or materials. Every congregation may find within its pews a unique gathering of Christ followers, each gifted for the work of ministry.

Too often, conversations about congregational growth and vitality are dominated by the numbers that reflect the size of the membership and not the metrics that measure congregational vitality. Answering the question of whether

or not your congregation is growing requires more than simple math: adding the births, transfers, and converts and subtracting the deaths, transfers, and dropouts. A true picture of congregational growth requires more than a tedious accounting of the membership. Congregational growth stems from a healthy congregational system.

A goal of church growth must begin with an honest check of the vital signs of the congregation. Robert Schnase has written a valuable little resource for congregations that gets this just right. Schnase examines five core congregational practices and presses congregations to answer how well they are practicing what they preach. Does your church offer radical hospitality to your community? Is worship passionate regardless of style? Is there an intentional system of faith development? Does commitment to your community involve risk-taking service? Does your community call others into extravagant generosity?

Growing churches know who they are and how they are doing in these vital areas. They understand how to focus on these essentials and not get lost in the excess of programming beyond their capacity. This kind of emotional growth is just as important as numerical growth. In fact, emotional growth is inexorably related to a congregation’s sense of mission. Growing churches know themselves well enough to offer their best gifts freely to the real community in which they find themselves.

Like a veteran gardener who waits to plant the seed until the soil is ready, churches must till their soil and prepare the ground in order for new growth to thrive for the long term. If churches are to grow a healthy community and not just attract a crowd then the difficult work of preparation must be faithfully attended. Small congregations grow when they live out of who they really are. Small churches grow when they become willing to give the church away to those who have not yet joined its ranks. Acting out of that clear sense of identity and purpose is the first and most faithful strategy for growth in attracting and nurturing disciples of Jesus Christ. Remember, your congregation—no matter its size—is not a static system, but a living organ in the body of Christ.

Jake Hall is Pastor of Heritage Baptist Fellowship in Canton.



beyond “corporate”

New Insights on Larger Churches

Susan Beaumont

RECENT RESEARCH has provided considerable data on how leadership, growth, and assimilation happen in congregations up to 400 and beyond 2,000 in weekly worship attendance. But what happens in between? What are the leadership, growth, and assimilation challenges faced by congregations with weekly attendance between 400 and 2,000? The lack of research and literature addressing this size range suggests that once a church has crossed the corporate size barrier, few significant adjustments in organizational strategy are required until transition into megachurch status. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

Having worked with a number of these congregations in my years as a senior consultant for Alban, I’ve discovered that very different issues are faced by the so-called corporate church depending on its attendance and budget. This has led me to develop a classification system that further stratifies the corporate size designation into what I call the *multi-celled church*, the *professional church*, and the *strategic church*.

The Multi-Celled Church

Congregations with annual operating budgets of between \$400,000 and \$1,000,000 often have between 250 and 400 people in worship attendance. This is the congregation that is learning to behave like a complex, multi-celled church, and the organizing principle that drives much of its decision making and attention is leadership development. In the multi-celled church there are never enough leaders to do the work that needs to be done to generate consistently excellent programs. This congregation is largely guided by lay leadership, and the staff team exists to support and coordinate the laity in their ministry.

The multi-celled church has already learned some things about managing multiple cell groups, but growth will stagnate if it does not come to terms with its identity as a complex congregation where everyone doesn’t know everyone else and not everyone is cared for by the pastor. The culture of the congregation must be intentionally managed to allow for multiple congregations to reside within the same corporate body.

The assimilation challenge in the multi-celled church is about creating enough programs of excellent quality to generate a continued stream of newcomers. The congregation that fails to develop enough new leaders to provide ongoing quality programming will stagnate and falter.

The pastor in a multi-celled congregation leads primarily by discerning and articulating an energizing vision for the congregation, one that will hold together the growing number of operating cells. The pastor must also be able to guide congregational leaders as they translate their own visions into action. As one pastor put it, “The real tension exists in trying to hold the vision and helping to build the vision with others. You’ve got to let them have their own vision but tie it all together.”

The overwhelming challenge of the multi-celled church pastor is learning to communicate a caring presence without being the “one” who provides care to each congregation member. The pastor must instead focus his or her energies on other members of the staff team and key lay leadership, who in turn are providing congregational care.

Staff members in the multi-celled church are just beginning to identify themselves as a team. Although some members of the team are specialists, most members are still generalists serving the needs of wide constituent

groups, so the team is challenged to balance and honor the role of the specialist alongside the role of the generalist.

The governing board of the multi-celled church must organize its work around the mission and vision of the congregation. Lay leadership is grasping the importance of saying no to ideas that distract the congregation from its mission. The board is also largely preoccupied with the development of new lay leadership to fill the growing volume of leadership needs.

The Professional Church

The congregation with an annual operating budget of between \$1,000,000 and \$2,000,000 and/or weekly worship attendance of 400 to 800 is driven by the need to professionalize operations. Its programming has outgrown the capacity of its lay leadership, and the demand for a staff team of specialists emerges.

In the professional church, growth is related to capacity. Ideas abound, but they are limited by the capacity of the staff team and/or the physical limitations of the facility. Consequently, the congregation's capacity for growth is largely a function of the size of its budget.

Assimilation of new members in the professional church becomes as much about watching the back door as it is about bringing people in through the front door. The professional congregation can quickly feel anonymous to newcomers, so finding innovative ways to keep track of members and to get people to engage beyond the worship experience takes a great deal of leadership energy.

The pastor of the professional congregation is learning a more managerial style of leadership, and letting go of a purely relational style. He or she is figuring out how to create and sustain the performance management cycle of the congregation through goal setting, budgeting, performance review, and a coaching leadership style.

As staff members take over many of the functions previously provided by volunteers, they must find new ways to engage the laity in the life and ministry of the congregation. The staff is increasingly moving away from a generalist orientation toward a specialist orientation. An executive leadership team of staff and lay leaders often emerges to coordinate and guide the work of the staff team. An administrator may be appointed in this size congregation to relieve the senior pastor from having to manage the church's day-to-day financial, personnel, building maintenance, and information technology needs.

In the professional congregation, the governing board must learn a more distant approach to leadership, relinquishing the daily management of the church to the staff team. Working with the pastor on vision articulation,

Continues to next page.

Multi-celled Church

Definition: Congregations with annual operating budgets of between \$400,000 and \$1,000,000 and often have between 250 and 400 people in worship attendance.

Challenges: The congregation is largely guided by lay leadership, and the staff team exists to support and coordinate the laity in their ministry.

The overwhelming challenge of the pastor is learning to communicate a caring presence without being the "one" who provides care to each congregation member. The pastor must instead focus his or her energies on other members of the staff team and key lay leadership, who in turn are providing congregational care.

Professional Church

Definition: Congregations with an annual operating budget of between \$1,000,000 and \$2,000,000 and/or weekly worship attendance of 400 to 800 people.

Challenges: Assimilation of new members is key. The congregation can quickly feel anonymous to newcomers, so finding innovative ways to keep track of members and to get people to engage beyond the worship experience takes a great deal of leadership energy.

The pastor is learning a more managerial, letting go of a purely relational style. He or she is figuring out how to create and sustain the congregation through goal setting, budgeting, performance review, and a coaching leadership style. Staff specialists take over many of the functions previously provided by volunteers.

Strategic Church

Definition: Congregations with a budget of between \$2,000,000 and \$4,000,000 and/or an average weekly attendance of 800 to 1,200.

Challenges: Assimilation in the strategic church must be managed as a seamless process of membership, discipleship, gift discovery, and leadership development linked through a fully formed network of classes and/or small groups.

The challenge of the strategic church pastor is learning to lead with a direction-setting orientation, learning to say no at the right times so that the staff team and governing board don't lose their focus. The staff team begins to form itself into identifiable and manageable sub-teams. The challenge of the staff team is avoiding a silo mentality, which every sub-team operates as if it were the only or most important.

Beyond Corporate

(Continues from page 9.)

the governing board is instrumental in creating policy and systems for managing performance, maintaining accountability, and preventing vision drift. The board spends less time on the daily fiduciary work of the congregation and more time on strategic leadership.

The Strategic Church

Once a congregation has a budget of between \$2,000,000 and \$4,000,000 and/or an average weekly attendance of 800 to 1,200, it requires a more strategic orientation. As congregations grow they develop complexly layered staffing structures, board structures, and governance practices. There are so many operating cells at work in strategic congregations that it is easy for individual cells to drift out of alignment and for tremendous energies to be wasted. For that reason the strategic congregation must align its leadership energies just as the wheels of a car must be aligned to prevent them from pulling against one another and wasting energy needlessly.

In the strategic church, the congregation owns its identity as a strategic institution and expects continued growth. The work to continue growth (program expansions, worship excellence, etc.) is managed by the staff team; it is not the missional focus of lay leadership. The challenge of strategic church growth is that the congregation can excel at just about anything it focuses its energies on, but it doesn't have the resources to excel at everything. This means strategic choices must be made.

Assimilation in the strategic church must be managed as a seamless process of membership, discipleship, gift discovery, and leadership development linked through a fully formed network of classes and/or small groups. So many program offerings exist in the strategic congregation that a new member can easily get lost in a maze of choices. Intentional paths of assimilation must be created and communicated to ensure that first-time attenders eventually become members and that members eventually step into leadership roles.

The challenge of the strategic church pastor is learning to lead with a direction-setting orientation. One pastor of a strategic church put it this way: "Whatever I pay attention to grows. If I pay too much attention to the wrong kind of conflict it will grow. If I don't pay enough attention to a new initiative it won't grow. I have to be extremely careful where I focus my gaze." Similarly, the strategic church pastor must learn to say no at the right times so that the staff team and governing board don't lose their focus. The strategic church pastor is always struggling to take a step back and examine the larger organizational picture. These

pastors are learning to personify the mission and vision of the congregation in everything they say and do. They will often crystallize the vision of the church into articulated sound bytes that every member of the staff team and board can learn and utilize.

The staff team in the strategic church has grown so large (usually well over 20 people) that it is virtually impossible for the collective group to identify itself as a singular team. Consequently, the staff team begins to form itself into identifiable and manageable sub-teams (the children's ministry team, the youth team, the administrative support team, etc.). The challenge of the staff team in the strategic church is avoiding a silo mentality, where every sub-team operates as if it were the only or most important team. Program staff members are continually challenged to keep a relational focus in ministry as the administrative components of their jobs expand. Maintaining the right balance between program and administrative support staff becomes critical as the complexity of the congregation mushrooms. An executive minister is often appointed in this size congregation to supervise the staff, who effectively run the day-to-day operations of the church so that the senior minister is free to focus exclusively on preaching, public speaking, and fundraising.

In the strategic church, decision making is hampered by a board that has too many people on it and committee structures that have grown too complex to allow for nimble decision making. Leadership, in general, is learning to support the decision making effectiveness of a smaller, trusted group of leaders. The effective governing board in the strategic church focuses on directional decision making, keeping the church focused in response to these basic questions: Who are we? What constituency do we serve? And what is God calling us to do or become? These boards exist to provide a strong support and accountability system to the senior minister and executive minister.

What It All Means

Is a church guaranteed to grow once it has learned to operate with an organizational and leadership infrastructure appropriate for its size? Not necessarily, but this much is clear: The congregation that doesn't adapt its structure and leadership approach to reflect the size congregation it wants to become has no hope of sustainable growth. And the congregation that has not been appropriately structured to manage its complexity will eventually stagnate or decline.

Adapted from "Beyond 'Corporate': New Insights on Larger Churches," from the Summer 2008 issue of *Congregations* magazine, copyright © 2008 by the Alban Institute. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

The Big Picture of Starting New Churches

Mikhail Lewis mike@alabamacbf.org

This may sound odd, but I actually enjoy the commute to my office. I live in a valley, in Alabama's "Ridge and Valley" region around Birmingham, and my office is 1,200 feet up at the top of a ridge. It is only a five-mile drive, but the winding road follows a steep cliff, and I enjoy the scenic vistas as they unfold before me while trying not to spill my coffee.



On many mornings, a fog lingers in my valley, and I begin my upward trek with limited visibility. Then, at some point along the way, the road takes me above the fog and a vast expanse becomes visible before my eyes. I literally get out of the fog and gain a new perspective on my surroundings. Suddenly I can see "the big picture."

We need to see "the big picture" when we think about starting new churches. We need to be able to get beyond the fog of our daily concerns and our local contexts in order to see what's unfolding all around us. In this brief article, I want to take you on a trip up above the fog and help you to see the vast opportunity that is before us.

Picture America. It has been growing more diverse for decades. According to recent reports, white people will no longer constitute the majority of Americans by the year 2042—eight years sooner than previously estimated. Overall, the U.S. has about 305 million people today, and the population is projected to reach four hundred million in 2039 and 439 million in 2050.¹ That is like adding the entire populations of France and England.

The reality is that our country is growing and changing rapidly, and our existing churches, no matter how healthy and effective they are, cannot keep pace. Starting new churches is not only a Biblical mandate, it is a practical necessity. Clearly, there is no better way to address our future.

In my job as Coordinator for New Church Starts for AlabamaCBF, I often have people ask me, "Don't you think Alabama has enough churches?" I surprise them when I answer emphatically, "No!" Even if every existing church in Alabama were filled to capacity, we would not have room for more than half of our existing population.

And that is not to consider that by 2050, Alabama is projected to increase by more than one million in total population, a gain of twenty percent.

And that future population will be much different from ours today. Alabama's Mexican or Mexican ancestry population is projected to rise by about 456,000 residents (720 percent). Other Hispanics are projected to rise less rapidly, i.e., by 254 percent, adding about 84,000 residents. The Asian population is also projected to rise rapidly—an increase of 215 percent, or about 92,000 additional people. Non-Hispanic whites will increase by about 248,000 persons (7.8 percent), and African-Americans by about 295,000 residents.² Are you starting to get the picture?

Baptists have always been concerned for the people around the globe who do not know Jesus Christ and are not vitally connected to a local church. Increasingly, people from all nations are taking up residence in the United States. "Global Missions" is no longer a reference to foreign lands, but it also refers to our task right here, in our own back yard. We need new churches that are designed to reach and minister to new populations of Koreans, Germans, Chinese, Hispanics, and the many other ethnic groups that are springing up all over our states. We need new churches designed for all kinds of people who are currently being left out.

As the fog clears and we get a good look at our changing landscape, I pray that we will be inspired. In the past, our Baptist forebears responded to the challenge and started the churches that we cherish today. Now it is up to us. Clearly, the need for new churches is urgent. I hope we will rise up to invest our best resources and personnel in response to this great challenge.

Mikhail Lewis, D. Min., is AlabamaCBF Coordinator for New Church Starts. He serves as Pastor of Fellowship of the Valley, a church in Hoover, Alabama, which he helped start. He previously started churches in Indiana and Massachusetts.

¹ *The Birmingham News*, Thursday, August 14, 2008; "White Americans not Majority by 2042," by Stephen Ohlemacher of The Associated Press, p. 3A.
² *Alabama: Population Projection Data, Federation for American Immigration Reform*, 25 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Suite 330, Washington, DC 20001.



All Churches Are Vital Players

Robin Norsworthy Robin_abc@bellsouth.net

Growth is a painful subject in our church. We worry about the future of our small congregation and continually struggle with a very small work force of volunteers. Carrying out ministry in small settings can be hard and exhausting—not only for the pastor, but for the faithful few who always volunteer to help, even in areas they do

... because of our smallness, we must look for creative ways to “do” church.

not feel particularly led to participate. We are told churches that are not growing are declining and so, in order to survive, a church must grow. I suppose that statement is true, but it seems to me it places the emphasis on numbers in the pews rather than ministry in the community. We, at UBC, believe our church is a vital player in God’s kingdom work and we live with the faith that God will not let us disappear, provided we continually seek God’s will in God’s kingdom work.

The painful reality is that churches like ours are not what the majority of the evangelical public seeks. Our weekly worship services are traditional and fairly formal, and we enjoy times of contemplative silence throughout. We could change our format, introduce contemporary music, and relax our formality, but that would lack integrity, because that is not part of our DNA. There are many places of worship for those who meet God in the



sounds of contemporary music and relaxed atmosphere, but there are fewer places like ours. The sixty to seventy congregants who make up our community of worship need our place of worship.

Our church population reflects our community—a place not growing very fast and with a rising group of retirees. So instead of looking for programs to fix our growth problem, we look to ministry and focus on our work. When we look at our congregation on Sunday morning, it is tempting to cry about the small number of children in our sanctuary. If we only count the numbers, we feel we are failing as a church. But if we look at ministry to our community, we get a much healthier view. During the summers, we partner with Chilton/Shelby Mental Health to offer a free summer drug awareness day camp for at-risk children. The children learn about the dangers of drugs, but also how to manage anger and feel good about themselves, how to cope with troubles in life, and how to handle peer pressure. We ministered to seventy kids from our area this summer, ending with vacation Bible school for them and a music camp. In addition, throughout the year, our child development center ministers to sixty-five children and their families (forty percent of the families are below poverty level); this year our daycare also received a grant to start a state certified Pre-K program.

We are a small band of Christians seeking to do God’s will in small ways. Sometimes, because of our smallness, we must look for creative ways to “do” church. The impact of our endeavors may never be known to us, but God continues to bless our efforts.

Robin Norsworthy is Pastor of University Baptist Church in Montevallo, Alabama.

How Does Your Church Grow?

Nikki Hardeman CBF/GA Associate Coordinator for Congregational Life, nhardeman@cbfga.org

FOR MORE THAN twenty-five years, Willow Creek Community Church has been a model for churches trying to reach out to spiritual seekers, and they have been growing at such a rate that they can now boast 17,000 in their weekend worship services. However, last January, *The Christian Century Magazine* printed an article titled, “Willow Creek finds limits to its model.” The article shared research showing that “increased involvement in church activities [is] not

necessarily accompanied by a boost in spiritual growth.” The research was based on Willow Creek Community Church and similar churches. Cally Parkinson, who worked with the church’s evangelical efforts, is quoted saying, “They [church activities] don’t seem to be lifting them up the spiritual ladder to a new level.” In response to this research, the Willow Creek Community is providing some on-line tools that will direct their congregants to resources on spiritual growth. They are also placing a

renewed emphasis on Bible study.¹

Growing a church is not always about growing in the number of people who attend the church. The question might even be asked, if we are bringing new people in, but no one is maturing in their faith, is the church really growing? Whatever your perspective is on this topic, the research on



Continues to page 14.

Evangelistic Zeal

Scott Ford CBF/GA Associate Coordinator for Missions, sford@cbfga.org

Have you ever thought of yourself as an evangelist? In the first church who hired me as youth minister, a traveling evangelist passed through. He



must have been a Broadway producer before becoming a preacher. Though others may have enjoyed the services, worship might have seemed more Spirit-filled to me if I had not witnessed the coaching that preceded the event or heard so much about the evangelist's financial needs. At the same church, I first experienced being summoned to the pastor's office. He wanted to know why none of the youth had been saved since I had already been leading the youth group for three weeks.

Funny thing about the confrontation, I thought of myself as having above average evangelistic zeal! On mission trips, while sharing devotionals, and in several college dorm room conversations, I shared propositional arguments and reasons why my friends should get saved. In many cases, the conversations were a head-game or verbal competition. I knew I had won the debate when the person agreed to pray the prayer on page fifteen (cf. *Eternal Life*, a little blue witnessing tract).

In addition to being regularly haunted by the Holy Ghost, who was probably not very happy with my overzealousness, two memorable situations led to a new crossroad in my faith journey.

Wearing only a pair of swim shorts and a large "salvation-beads" rope around my neck (a better visual image than it is today), I met a guy on the boardwalk at Fort Lauderdale beach during a Spring Break mission trip. Appearing to be

in his forties, Lamar was an African American man wearing a Panama Jack hat and sunglasses, a Hawaiian shirt, and long pants. A few minutes into my spiel, my new friend reached into his bag and handed me a copy of *Watchtower*, a publication of the Jehovah's Witnesses Church. There we stood, two people of faith hoping to convert one another.

Second, I remember when an evangelist and scripture-memory guru visited campus for a week. As the Baptist Campus Ministry Outreach Director, I was asked to spend a day with him. As he spoke to strangers and people I knew, he seemed to ambush and attack them rather than "share good news." A few days later, I heard that the expert ran into an acquaintance of mine who was said to have become a Christian. Because I knew David, I was assigned to do a follow-up visit, and during the visit, there was a certain level of distancing and awkwardness. Feeling what seemed to be a sense of betrayal, David hardly ever spoke to me again.

Seeing others as targets, manipulating them into making premature commitments (moreover limiting one's "conversion moment" to a purely rational encounter), and feeling ultimately responsible for others' relationship with God were three areas in need of evaluation.

Initially my evangelistic pendulum swung from overzealousness to no zeal at all. The problem with breaking old habits of insensitivity, dogmatism, and having a Savior-complex was that I no longer knew how to "witness," share God's love, or invite people to accept Jesus. My skill set was

limited to former practices, so I was paralyzed for a time. And though some may say, "just doing something is better than doing nothing at all," doing something wrong can be more harmful than doing nothing at all. We must be careful that our "reaching out" does not push people farther away from God, Jesus, the church, or ourselves as Christians.

So how do we achieve balance? Many books and conversations shape my current views on sharing the Good News of Christ and working together to go and make disciples of all nations. My personal thoughts and ideas about evangelism have evolved much over the years, and I am sure they will continue to change in the future. Knowing there is not room enough in this edition of *Visions* to give a comprehensive summary, yet feeling compelled to give some word of direction or advice, here is one concept that might prove helpful to you or your congregation.

George Hunter's book *The Celtic Way of Evangelism* is a breath of fresh air. Turning some of our practices upside down, Hunter's observations and suggestions are wonderfully helpful. We can learn from "The Celtic Way," which allows every member of the faith community to take part in evangelism, whether at home, in the community or marketplace, or at a church building. If you would like to share other recommended readings, resources, or effective evangelism ministries or ideas, please email me at sford@cbfga.org.

Maybe we can find a way to share our ideas, practices, and stories with one another. CBF/GA

Evangelism Models

Roman Model

Presentation
Decision
Fellowship

Celtic Model

Fellowship
Ministry and Conversations
Belief, Invitation to Commitment

By George G. Hunter III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, p. 53



SHAKING UP THE CHURCH: Baptist Women Pastors in Georgia

Pamela R. Durso pamdurso@baptisthistory.org

In 1887, Mary Cook, treasurer of the National Baptist Women's Conference, addressed the male-dominated National Baptist Convention. Wanting to wake up the leaders of this African American Baptist organization, she said: "God is shaking up the church—He is going to bring it up to something better and that too, greatly through the work of the women." In Georgia Baptist moderate life, God is still shaking up the church in order to make it better—and in doing that amazing work, God is still using women.



Among those women are thirteen who are currently serving as Baptist pastors or co-pastors, including Wendy Joyner, who became pastor of Fellowship Baptist Church in Americus on June 4, 1995; Katrina Brooks, who has served as co-pastor of North Broad Baptist Church in Rome since November, 2003; Julie Pennington-Russell, who has pastored First Baptist Church in Decatur since August 2007; and Mimi Walker, who has co-pastored for three years and since February 2008 has served Druid Hills Baptist Church in Atlanta. The remarkable stories of each of these women provide encouragement and inspiration. Yet, their stories are only one piece of the Baptist puzzle of women's pastoral leadership.

Another piece of that puzzle is not nearly as encouraging. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia has 136 affiliating churches; only 9.5 percent of its churches are pastored or co-pastored by women. The national Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's statistics are even lower. Less than six percent of its affiliating churches

have women serving in those roles, and the Georgia Baptist Convention, with its 3,600 churches, has less than .4 percent of its churches being led by women.

So what are we losing as Baptists by continuing to close the door to women pastors? We are, and have been for a very long time, losing called and gifted ministers to other denominations and to non-profits and parachurches. For years, Methodist, Presbyterian, and United Church of Christ churches along with social ministry organizations have recognized the gifts of Baptist women, embraced their leadership, and called them as ministers, and as Baptists, we are a lesser people as a result. But we have also lost gifted and called women to cynicism, anger, and pain. Women who have been shut out of leadership positions, who have had their ministerial skills ignored, and who have been turned away by Baptist churches have been wounded and scarred, and many of them never return to church, much less to a Baptist church. Vilma Manso sadly acknowledged that "the pain of not 'being' can drive a woman who has been called into a spiritual crisis." By God's grace, Manso moved through her personal period of hurt, and in 2006, she was called as co-pastor of Un Nuevo Amanecer in Morrow.

We as moderate Baptists have too much at stake to keep shutting doors to women. We cannot afford to lose more of them. So we need to get to work and identify and call out the gifted girls and women in our congregations, we need to encourage them to receive theological training, and we need to be open to the Spirit as we fill ministry positions in our churches, knowing that the Spirit may well lead us to call a woman. We still have lots of work to do in order to get to "something better."

Pamela R. Durso is associate executive director-treasurer of the Baptist History and Heritage Society. She also serves as treasurer of Baptist Women in Ministry.

How Does Your Church Grow? *(Continues from page 12.)*

Willow Creek and similar churches suggests that simply because a program brings people into the church does not mean that the program is helping people grow in their faith. When we come at church from a purely programmatic approach, it is easy to lose sight of the people who are actually showing up. This does not mean that programs are bad or the wrong

way to go. Often times, programs are the ways in which we provide experience, learning opportunities, and community building time to our congregations. However, when the program becomes the end rather than the means to the end, which hopefully is spiritual maturity and a faithful community, then we lose sight of the great commission to make disciples.

Continues to page 15.

Growth
is always important,
but even more important
is the way
in which we go
about growing
the church.

OPPORTUNITIES / REPORTS / UPDATES

New from Smyth and Helwys

Using the same voice heard in *Formations Commentary*, Cecil Sherman writes an autobiography focusing on his works as husband, father, pastor, and minister. He shares his history from his ancestors to his work at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. Dr. Sherman writes of his struggles through the days of his pastorates, the kindness of his churches, and his role in the 1980s SBC political controversy.

An inward look at a man known for his discernment and intellectual expeditions, *By My Own Reckoning* is a book to be studied and incorporated into the reader's own life.

Financial Update

Budget Receipts as of August 31, 2008

Year to Date.....	\$138,867.39
Requirement.....	\$154,400.01
Over/Under.....	<\$15,532.62>
Month to Date.....	\$41,865.09
Monthly Requirement.....	\$51,466.67
Over/Under.....	<\$9,601.58>

CBF/GA ...
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to historic Baptist principles
to carry out the Great Commission
under the Lordship of Jesus Christ
in a fellowship
where every Christian
has the freedom
and the responsibility
to exercise God's gift
and calling.

Ministers on the Move

Alan Mitchell, CBF/GA Associate Coordinator for Reference & Referral, amitchell@cbfga.org



Matt DuVall is Pastor of FBC Middlesboro, KY.

Todd Lowe is new Pastor at Cedar Spring BC in Spartanburg, SC.

Perry McCain is Minister of Music at FBC Lufkin, TX.

Stan Braley is Pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Macon.

David Benjamin is Pastor of Winfree Memorial BC in Midlothian (Richmond), VA.

David Walker is Minister of Education at FBC Thomson.

Adam West is the Minister to Youth at FBC Ft. Oglethorpe.

Josh Hughes is Pastor of The Oaks BC in Lyons.

Ron Higdon is Interim Pastor at FBC in Athens.

Valarie Hardy is Minister to Children at FBC in Athens.

Charlie Bryan is Pastor of a church in North Carolina.

Christian Byrd is Minister to Youth at FBC Dalton.

Rawdon L. (Sonny) Gallman is Pastor of Central BC in Daytona, FL.

J. Bazrett Owen, second year student at McAfee, has joined John Adams as Co-Pastor of Union Baptist Church in West Point.

If you know of other ministers recently "on the move," please let me know at amitchell@cbfga.org. Or call or write: 478-957-2295,

CBF of GA
POB 4343
Macon GA 31208-4343.

How Does Your Church Grow? *(Continues from page 14.)*

Likewise, when growing the church becomes the end, it is easy to neglect the people who are already there.

It is important for us to remember that there are many ways to grow a church. Numerically is only one way church can grow. Churches can also grow in faith, in their commitment to being missional, in their acceptance of other people, and in a myriad of other ways. Spiritual growth does not happen simply because people show up at church. Spiritual growth happens when individuals engage the gospel through spiritual discipline and in community and conversation. When we lose sight of this, we end up with people who are spiritually immature and begin to lose interest in church.

Growth is always important, but even more important is the way in which we go about growing the church. So, how do we grow the church? What are the most important values when we talk about growth? When we plan programs, do we sacrifice quality for quantity? As you begin to look at your church and assess how it is growing, consider these questions and take stock of all the different ways your church might be growing. Celebrate what is growing before you chastise what is not growing. CBF/GA

I Adelle Banks, "Willow Creek finds limits to its model," *The Christian Century*, January 29, 2008

COMING UP

■ **October 17-19, 2008**

ReCharge: Fall Youth Retreat

The Swamp Retreat Center, Union Point
www.ReChargecbf.org

■ **November 9-10, 2008**

CBF/GA Fall Convocation — FBC Augusta

■ **January 16-18, 2009**

Georgia Youth Choir Festival

The Calvin Center, Hampton
http://www.cbfga.org/church_life/students/youth/georgia-youth-choir-festival-2009.html/

■ **March 13-14, 2009**

CBF/GA General Assembly

FBC Columbus

■ **March 20-22 & 27-29, 2009**

March Mission Madness

March 20-22, 2009 • Central Baptist Church, Newnan
March 27-29, 2009 • Milledge Avenue Baptist, Athens
<http://www.marchmissionmadness.org/>
Worship Leader: Kyle Matthews www.kylematthews.com
www.marchmissionmadness.org

■ **June 8-12 & June 15-19, 2009**

Taliaferro Summer Camps

Stay in touch with the latest events!
www.cbfga.org/calendar/



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