

REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS

INTEGRATED PLANNING CONSULTATION

Ministries * Staff * Facilities * Finances

**HILLCREST BAPTIST CHURCH
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Submitted September 21, 2005, by:

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INTRODUCTION

God's timing

For the kind of work Hillcrest Baptist is doing right now in discerning God's vision for the future, timing is critical. During our time with you, we (Greg and Eddy) were struck by how ready the leaders of the church were for the possibilities we presented. Someone told us, "If you had come a few years ago, that would not have been true."

It seems clear that God began laying the groundwork for this process years ago as the culture of the church has become more missional and more open to creative ways of doing ministry. We believe that this is God's timing for this process, and because the soil was ready, we expect this process to be extremely fruitful for Hillcrest Baptist and the Hilltop neighborhood.

In July and August of 2005, you completed an extensive self-study with Dave Horn serving as your consultation coordinator. Eddy and Greg were with you August 25-28. This report represents the next step of the process.

Goals of the consultation

You asked us to help you with the following goals:

- Help us structure for growth
 - Consider changes we have made and changes we must consider
 - Consider structures changes for personnel, leadership, financial, physical, and ministries
- Discover our maximum potential (the number of people that can be accommodated on our campus at one time)
- Help us identify barriers we will face in our growth
 - Help us plan our strategy for overcoming these barriers
- Steps we should begin to consider and implement in establishing a baby church.

This report addresses all of these items.

The church as living organism

"I planted the seed," Paul wrote, referring to the church, "and Apollos watered it; but God made it grow" (1 Cor. 3:6, REV). In North America, we tend to approach church growth as a mechanical process. If we can just adopt the right programs, hire the right staff, and work hard and smart enough, we can make the church grow. But Paul says the church is alive, a growing

thing.

Growing a living thing is very different from assembling a machine. We can, by assembling the various parts, build a machine. But we cannot build a plant. We can only plant the seed and water it, pull the weeds and remove the pests. We can in various ways identify and remove barriers to growth. But we cannot make a plant grow. Only God can do that.

A biblical approach to church growth, then, begins with the understanding that the growth of a church comes from the supernatural life that is within the church--God's life. It is not our assignment to make the church grow, but we do have an assignment. As gardeners it is our job to identify barriers to growth and remove them so that God is free to grow the church.

In this Integrated Planning Consultation, our process has been to study and analyze four areas--ministries, staffing, facilities, and finances--to identify any barriers to healthy growth that exist in each of these areas. We then recommended possible action steps to remove those barriers, and integrated the recommendations for all four areas into a prioritized sequence.

These recommended action steps cannot *make* the church grow. But, because it is the nature of healthy organisms to grow, and because Hillcrest Baptist is a healthy church, we believe that as you remove these barriers, the church will grow.

While making room for more people is one goal of this consultation process, that is not the only goal. We know that it is your goal to become healthy as a church and more effective in carrying out God's mission in your neighborhood. In fact, that is your most important goal. This report addresses that as well.

Our job as consultants is not to make strategic decisions for you, but rather to assist you in understanding your strengths, your God-given vision, and the systemic barriers that hinder growth both in numbers and in effectiveness. We can point you to options and to resources and make suggestions. But it is up to you to make and implement the decisions that will remove the barriers to growth and greater effectiveness. We expect you to take our recommendations and improve on them before they are implemented. Far from our feeling hurt if you make some changes to our recommendations, if you don't make some changes, we will be concerned that you may not have really understood the principles driving our recommendations.

Our purpose is not to develop a plan that you then implement; our purpose is to help you learn new ways of understanding and thinking about the church's mission so that your decisions will for many years be guided by these new insights into how most effectively to be the church.

INTEGRATED PLANNING CONSULTATION

Hillcrest Baptist Church—Columbus, Ohio
Leadership Team Session

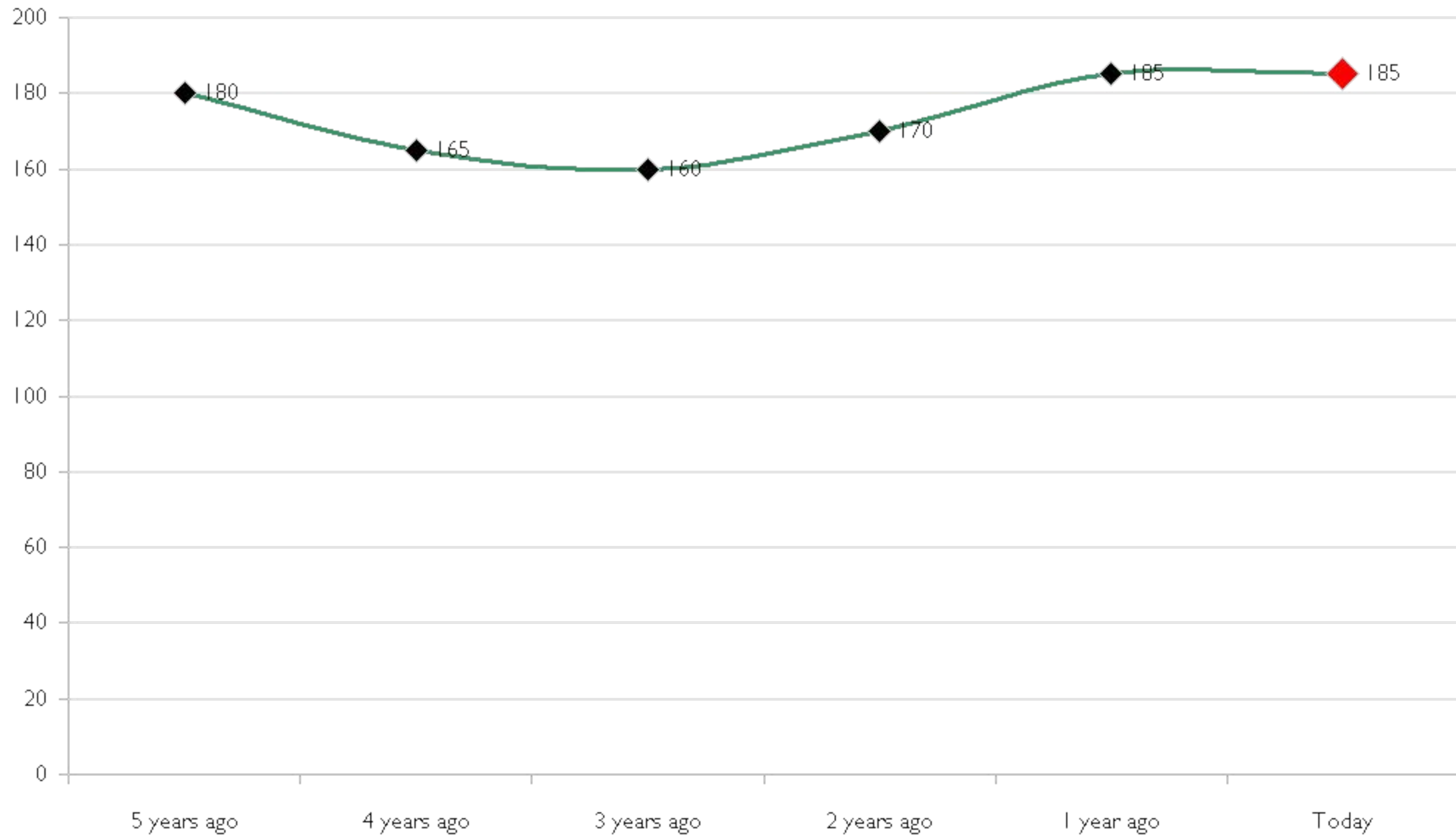
SATURDAY, August 27, 2005

9:00--10:30	Ministry	Introductions Church of Acts Purpose of the consultation Natural Church Development Survey > Loving Relationship > Gift-Oriented Ministry
10:30--10:45	Break	
10:45--12:00	Facilities	Growth capacity of present site Strategies for accommodating growth
	Ministries	Ministry strategies > Discipleship > Connections > Outreach
12:00--12:45	Lunch	
12:45--2:30	Staff	Staffing recommendations > Worship Arts Coordinator > Nursery Coordinator > Facility Manager > Director of Ministry Development
	Facilities	Facility needs > Children's ministry/nursery > Youth ministry > Community Plaza (foyer) > Offices > Handicap access > Rest rooms
2:45-3:00	Break	
3:00--5:00	Facilities	Facility recommendation Phase 1: Children's ministry Phase 2: Nursery & youth center Phase 3: Facade, community plaza, offices
	Finances	Your giving level Your budget priorities Financial recommendations

Next steps
Closing prayer



Attendance Growth





MINISTRIES

Natural Church Development survey

One tool we use to identify barriers to growth in the ministry area is the Natural Church Development survey. As part of your self-study process, your senior pastor filled out a pastor's questionnaire, and thirty of your core members filled out member questionnaires, each consisting of about eighty questions. This survey measures your church's relative strength or weakness in eight areas that have been demonstrated to be essential to healthy church growth.

From your strongest factor to your minimum factor, here is how your quality characteristics ranked:

Loving Relationships	69
Empowering Leadership	65
Functional Structures	65
Need-oriented Evangelism	62
Holistic Small Groups	61
Inspiring Worship Service	56
Passionate Spirituality	55
Gift-Oriented Ministry	52

What do these scores mean? A score of 50 is a median score which is normed for English-speaking churches in the U.S. This means that a church that scores 50 is healthier than half the American churches and less healthy than half the American churches. As you can see, Hillcrest Baptist scores above average on all eight Quality Characteristics!

These are not percentile scores. Rather, these scores measure how far above or below the median a church is. Since this survey uses a standard deviation of 15, that means that 68% of all churches score between 35 and 65. In other words, a score of 65 represents the 86th percentile. The goal for a church engaged in the NCD process is to raise the scores of all eight characteristics to 65 or higher and keep them there. When a church scores 65 or higher on all 8 characteristics, there is a 99.9% chance that it will also be a numerically growing church.

The idea is for a church to focus not on numerical growth, but on becoming healthier, letting the numerical growth take care of itself.

What your scores say about Hillcrest

Your highest score is Loving Relationships. While it is common for a small church (under 100) to score high on Loving Relationships, for a church of 200 to score this high is remarkable. This says that there is something really special going on at Hillcrest in this area.

Your second highest scores are in the areas of Empowering Leadership and Functional Structures. Empowering Leadership measures the extent to which you have a leadership culture that empowers people to do ministry. A high score in this area is usually a good indication that the church will be able to implement the recommendations growing out of a consultation process such as this. Your high Functional Structures score tells us that your boards, committees, staff,

and decision-making structures are helping you carry out the church's mission rather than being a hindrance to it.

Your Minimum Factor is Gift-Oriented Ministry. That means that this is the area where you, guided by your Church Health Team and staff, need to focus the greatest attention to remove barriers to healthy growth.

You scored below average on five Gift-Oriented Ministry questions:

- I know my spiritual gifts.
- I enjoy the tasks I do in the church fellowship.
- The tasks I perform in my church are in accordance with my gifts.
- I feel my task in the church is a great challenge.
- I know what value my work has in the overall work of the church.

This tells you that you have a good number of workers who don't know what their spiritual gifts are, who do not feel their ministries are a good match for their gifts, who do not find their ministry to be challenging enough, and who are not sure of the value of their contribution. This all points to a slot-filling culture—one in which people are being recruited to staff program openings, rather than a culture of call-driven ministry. Keep in mind, this is not to say that all your workers are slot-filling. Your scores were below average on these questions, but they were not at zero. What it means is that by being more intentional about empowering people to minister in the areas where God has called them and for which God has gifted them, ministry will become a greater joy and will increase in effectiveness.

From slot-filling to call-guided ministry

If most members of a church are not in ministries that closely match their gifts and call, the most obvious way to correct that is to come up with a better system for matching people to slots. This could include spiritual gift testing and providing trained ministry mentors to help people find the right places of ministry. A church that does this will almost certainly do a better job of placing people in appropriate, fulfilling ministries. But doing a better job of slot-filling only partially addresses the problem.

A thoroughgoing solution requires a fundamentally different approach to mobilizing people into ministry. Rather than starting with the open slot and asking, "Who could do this job?", we begin by helping every member in the congregation discern gifts and call and then ask, "How can we empower you to do what God is calling you to do?" In some cases, the person can be matched to an existing church ministry.

One of the things a church will notice, though, if it becomes serious about starting with members' calls rather than program slots is that about half of all Christians are called primarily to ministries outside the walls of the church. And most churches have so many programs designed to serve their own members that it takes 85% to 90% of all available volunteers to keep those programs operating. A program-driven or slot-filling approach, then, tends to concentrate workers on maintaining programs that service the church members. A call-guided approach that begins by helping members get in touch with their God-given passions tends to result in an approximately equal balance between ministries of outreach and ministries of nurture.

A commitment to transition from program-driven to call-guided ministry, then, requires the courage to be willing to release people from maintaining church programs so they are free to invest their time and energy in reaching out to those outside the church for whom God has given them a passion. This will, in most cases, require letting go of some church programs, combining programs with similar purposes so they don't require as many volunteers, or otherwise streamlining programs so they do not require as many workers.

Of course, the idea is that when only those people are working in a ministry who are called and gifted by God to do it, the ministry effectiveness should increase. If we start with people's

calls and watch where God is calling people to minister, this is really a matter of letting God determine our ministry and programming priorities, starting new ministries in areas where God is calling people, letting previously fruitful ministries go out of existence once the people whom God at one time called to lead them have moved on, and coming up with creative ways to do other ministries that may be less worker-intensive.

Starting grassroots ministry teams

While some people who are called to work outside the walls of the church can join existing agencies and ministries in the community (that may or may not be officially connected to your church), one of the most exciting options is that of giving birth to new ministries. The church that is committed to empowering members for ministry must have in place a clearly-defined and well-understood process by which new ministry teams can come into existence. This must include the expectation that new ministries will not normally originate with church staff or with governing bodies, but with grassroots members to whom God has given a vision and passion for a specific ministry. There must be a process by which people are invited to share their sense of passion with the wider body (this can be done in many ways) and others are invited to explore together the possible formation of a ministry team.

You must create an environment in which risk-taking is rewarded. If one self-organizing ministry team out of three really takes off and flies, that is a good percentage. For the two out of three that don't fly, the experience of organizing a ministry team should not be looked upon as a failure as much as a learning experience. Team members learn more about their calls, their gifts, principles of leadership, what does and does not work in developing a new ministry. They take these valuable life lessons with them to the next ministry team they join, applying this wisdom to the new context.

This is in sharp contrast to the "control" mechanisms of most churches that have a system of boards and committees to say what kinds of ministries people can and cannot do. "Control" structures tend to abort creative grassroots ministries before they begin by saying to the people, "Unless you have been elected to a board or are on staff, it's not your place to envision new ministries." And the occasional entrepreneur who does come up with a new ministry idea may be placed in the position of trying to persuade a committee and/or board to be passionate about her call (which, perhaps, they are not supposed to be all that passionate about if God has not called them to it) and to try to make the case in advance that the venture is likely to succeed. (What board would want to be caught approving a venture that eventually fails?) This kills creative risk-taking.

Staffing for call-guided ministry

In a church characterized by call-guided ministry, staffing is critical. In the program-driven church, it is the responsibility of staff to envision, implement, control, and fill slots for programs. In the call-guided church, it is the responsibility of staff to nurture a culture in the church in which every member truly sees him or herself as a minister. It is the responsibility of staff to help every member identify call and gifts (call tells you what ministry team you should be on; gifts tell you what position you should plan on the team). It is the responsibility of staff to create an environment of creative risk-taking as opposed to one of control. This includes changing the way boards and committees function so that they no longer focus on giving or withholding permission, but focus on the question of "How can we help you fulfill your call?" It is the responsibility of staff to set in motion a process by which new grassroots ministry teams can be born and nurtured, and by which ministries can be gracefully put to rest when they have fulfilled their usefulness or when they are no longer viable for lack of leadership or other reasons. It is the responsibility of staff to be available to provide coaching to ministry team leaders and

members as for most of them, this is a very different way of doing ministry.

Core ministry teams (those responsible for ministries the church considers essential to its core identity) will be handled somewhat differently than non-core ministry teams. Non-core teams will have much greater freedom to fail. Core ministry teams will have direct staff supervision and staff will be responsible to step in if the team flounders.

For more on how to help people make the transition from slot-filling to call-guided ministry, see the book *WHEN THERE'S NO BURNING BUSH: Following Your Passions to Discover God's Call* by Eddy Hall and Gary Morsch. This book guides its users through a call discovery process which takes place in a group setting. Also, Living Stones can facilitate a retreat for church leaders or for an entire congregation, guiding them through this call-discovery process. This is especially useful when there is a desire to help an entire congregation make the paradigm shift from program-driven to call-driven ministry quickly.

MINISTRY RECOMMENDATIONS: DISCIPLESHIP

In our time with you, we focused on ministry recommendations in three areas: discipleship, connections, and outreach.

We began by looking at how Jesus disciplined the Twelve—in the context of intimate community, not in a seminary setting. We looked at seven characteristics of the relationship between the discipler and the disciple, as adapted from Larry Richards' book *Christian Education* (pp. 84-58):

1. There must be frequent, long-term contact with the discipler.
2. There must be a warm, loving relationship with the discipler.
3. The disciple must see what is going on in the heart of the discipler.
4. The disciple needs to see the discipler in various life settings and situations.
5. The discipler's actions and values must be clear and consistent.
6. The actions of the discipler must line up with the values of the church community.
7. The discipler must explain his/her lifestyle with instruction accompanying shared experience.

Loving, intimate relationship is at the very heart of disciple-making, whether one-on-one friendships or experiences of community.

Later in that same book (pp. 113-114), Richards says:

"The formal school setting *itself* defines certain relationships and certain kinds of sharing (of ideas, not feelings) as appropriate, and thus rules out the kinds of relationships which are significant for discipling!"

"Strikingly, it seems that when we adopted from our culture the formal school approach to nurture, we in fact set up the conditions under which discipling and growth in likeness are least likely to take place!"

In inviting people into an intimate relationship with Christ, it is impossible to improve on the method of discipling used by Jesus, by Paul, and by the many house church leaders of the New Testament era. To the extent that the church has taken disciple-making out of the context of intimate relationship, it has become less effective in making disciples, in raising up Jesus followers for whom relating to Jesus is the very center and driving force of their lives.

Every ministry or program in the church whose purpose is to make disciples must be evaluated in light of this question: How effectively does it facilitate the formation and growth of intimate, loving community between disciplers and disciples? Note that making disciples is *not* about mastering classroom knowledge of the Bible. The Bible, of course, is indispensable to

disciple-making, but the most important way the Bible is used is not for academic-type study; rather, the discipler embodies the biblical teaching first, then, as opportunity arises from questions, explains the biblical principles later to the interested disciple. (Remember the example of how Jesus taught his disciples to pray?)

There is no one right way to translate this central biblical principle into program. The key is that the church must be about community-building for the sake of communicating and living out kingdom values in community. This requires that some form(s) of small group life must be at the very heart of church life. Many churches do this in many different ways, but truly effective disciple-making is probably impossible apart from healthy community. The New Testament knows of no other way to make disciples. At the end of this section is a paper by Eddy Hall on “Growing Small Groups.” This is one way to go about growing a small group ministry, but it is not the only way. You may want to take some of the ideas from this paper and ignore others.

Discipling children and youth

In your ministries with children and youth, you need to ask the same question you ask about discipling adults: How can we as a church facilitate intimate, loving relationships of community that bring discipler and disciple together for the purpose of life transformation?

One trap that most churches fall into in the area of children’s ministry is creating more ministry positions than there are people called by God to fill those positions. Whenever I (Eddy) have worked with a church that has children’s Sunday school, children’s church, and a full-scale Wednesday night program for children, the children’s ministry coordinator always has trouble finding enough called, gifted workers to fill all those positions. I have concluded that 90% or more of all churches are overprogrammed. We are great at starting new programs; we are lousy at letting go of old ones. When we keep adding new programs without retiring old ones, the result is that we end up with more programs than we can do with excellence. Willing workers end up wearing three, four, five, even six ministry hats, although (except for paid staff) most admit that they can’t do more than a couple of these jobs with excellence. The result is workers who are spread too thin and burned out, and ministries that are mediocre in quality.

We do a better job of ministry when we encourage people to do only those one or two ministries for which God has given them the greatest passion, and to do those with excellence.

Children’s ministry is the one area of church life where churches have the most consistent problem “filling all the slots.” That is probably because it is the one area of church life most susceptible to overprogramming. As a way of strengthening your discipleship ministry to children, we recommend that you explore the option of blending your children’s Sunday school program with your Wednesday evening program, taking the best elements of both (some Bible-based curriculum together with some active learning methods) and create a first-class blended Christian education program. This suggestion is prompted as a way to correct overprogramming with the goal of decreasing “slot-filling” and enhancing the quality of your children’s ministry for both children and children’s workers.

In reshaping your children’s ministry, this may also give you the opportunity to do something creative in terms of facility, resolving some of your facility issues related to children’s ministry and strengthening your outreach to families with children. More on this in the facility section.

Ministry recommendations: Connections

When it comes to making people feel welcome, Hillcrest is both very strong and very weak. Your strength is that you are genuinely welcoming to visitors and really good at making them feel at home. Your weakness is that you are not very intentional about making sure that guests are greeted and assisted in finding their way to where they need to go. This probably means that

those who do make connections feel warmly welcomed, but that you also have visitors who get lost and who do not receive a good first impression of their visit to Hillcrest Baptist. We noticed, for example, that you did not have any greeters at the front door during Sunday school, although there were people who were arriving during that time, one of them a first-time visitor. Someone happened to be there to answer this gentleman's question about how to find a class, but it seemed to be more by coincidence than design.

We recommend that you identify those people within your congregation who are most passionate about making new people feel at home in your church and empower them to function as your Connections Ministry Team. They will be responsible for your greeting and ushering ministry, for follow up, for looking at your service and programs through the eyes of visitors to suggest ways they can be more visitor-friendly.

Charge this ministry team with four goals, then leave it to them to experiment to find the best ways to achieve these goals.

Goal 1: Every Sunday visitor, who does not wish to be invisible, will not leave the building until he or she has made at least one friend--a person who, when that visitor returns a second time--will be looking forward to seeing the visitor again.

Goal 2: Every first-time visitor will receive a phone call or doorstep visit from a member (not a staff member) within 2 to 48 hours of their first visit to the church, depending on what is most appropriate in your community. Doorstep visitors will leave a gift and information about the church, but will not go in.

Goal 3: The Connections Ministry Team will facilitate a process of helping newcomers find a place in some kind of small group (home-based small group, Sunday school class, men's fellowship, etc.) within three to six weeks of their first visit. (The research shows that if they haven't connected in this way within six weeks, you've probably lost them.)

Goal 4: The Connections Ministry Team will facilitate a process of helping newcomers identify their spiritual gifts and call and move into intentional personal ministry within three to six months after their personal visit. This does not mean that the Connections Ministry Team runs the ministry of gift/call counseling, but that they will work closely with that ministry to make sure newcomers are handed off cleanly to that ministry.

When a newcomer has found a home in a small group and moved into an intentional personal ministry, they can be considered a part of the congregation.

According to Charles Arn, the average non-growing church assimilates one out of ten visitors into the congregation. Churches that are growing at the rate of 5% or more a year assimilate two in ten visitors into the congregation. Having an effective Connections Ministries Team may be the single simplest thing you can do to increase the growth of your church.

Because welcoming is a ministry to which people are called, greeting should not be considered a chore that everyone has to take a turn at. It should be done by those who are most passionate about making people feel welcome. The same is true of those who do the 2- to 48-hour follow up. This can be a small ministry hat that many people can wear, but it should not be something people do out of guilt. It should be something people do because they really want to make newcomers feel welcome.

Give your Connections Ministries Team the authority to do whatever they need to do to fulfill their ministry goals. Encourage them to try different approaches to making people feel welcome, to always be on the lookout for ways to improve your welcome. Be prepared to try lots of things that don't work very well before finding those that do work well. Charge this group with evaluating what you are now doing and sorting through what parts of it work well and which might be improved upon.

We understand that since our time with you, you have already made the move of making

your Fellowship Team responsible for all four of these Connections goals. That is an excellent first step. Recognize that fully implementing this ministry is a process that may take two or three years. You can begin to take first steps immediately, but don't be overwhelmed by the size of the task.

A handbook for your Connections Ministry Team titled *Welcome to the Family* can be found following this report.

Ministry recommendations: Outreach

Most American churches approach outreach with the question, "How can we get people to come to church?" It can be a good thing to invite people to church, but we want to suggest that it can be an even better thing to ask, "How can we take the church to the people of our neighborhood?"

You have already begun doing this. Hilltop Hoops is a terrific example. Although this program was held on church grounds, the fact that it was an outdoor program made it part of the neighborhood. People walking by stopped to see what was happening. Neighbors watched out their windows. People driving by slowed down to watch.

If you had had a gym and were holding the program inside the gym, most of this would never have happened, and participation would almost certainly have been much less.

Another example is your Myti Oaks day camp held at a neighborhood community center. As Greg toured the neighborhood with Dave and Pastor Tim, he was impressed with how many community resources are available to you for doing ministry throughout your neighborhood in ways that can take the church to the people rather than asking people to come to the church.

Many churches get caught in the trap of confusing a bigger campus with a growing church. But the first century church had no buildings, yet its growth was phenomenal. They grew by multiplying relationships, by building more and more circles of community, not by building buildings.

Given the opportunities available in the community for go-strategy ministries, it is very conceivable that Hillcrest Baptist Church could eventually grow to 1000 to 2000 or even more in weekly worship attendance without ever owning a larger campus than what you own right now. More on this in the facility section.

The key to a "go strategy" is to think relationships, not programs: How can we build significant relationships with the people in our neighborhood to whom God has called us? "Program" is not a bad word, but we have to remember that the purpose of the programs is to build relationships.

For example, if you measure the success of Hilltop Hoops as a program, you might use the number of junior high students who signed up to play ball as the measure of the program's success. But if the real goal of Hilltop Hoops is to build relationships, a better measure of success is, "How many relationships did we build with people (ball players, their siblings, their friends, their parents) that are continuing now that the program is over?" In fact, if your goal is relationships, not participation in a program, it becomes clear that the most important ministry team members are those youth sponsors and parents who stand on the sidelines striking up conversation with the family members and friends who are also watching the games. That is where you find the greatest potential for relationship building.

Then, if the real goal is relationships, what are you going to do to nurture those relationships once the program is over?

You'll want to use the same metric in evaluating your day camps, your Pioneer Club, and other outreach ministries.

Church Health Team

The suggestions presented in this section and the accompanying reports on small group life and Connections Ministry are far beyond what any church can accomplish in a year. It will be necessary to establish clear priorities so that you do not become overwhelmed.

To guide this process, your Church Health Team is charged with digesting your NCD scores and these ministry recommendations, identifying key issues (barriers to healthy growth) that need to be addressed in the coming year, and then developing an Action Plan to address these barriers. After considering many possible action steps, the Church Health Team (CHT) will need to select two to five Action Steps to be completed during the next year. Other Action Steps will need to wait till next year. Remaining focused on doing a few things well is key to optimizing your progress. The CHT is an advisory group and does not assume any of the authority now held by your Vision Team (unless the Vision Team would choose to delegate specific authority to them.). If recommendations from the CHT require action by the Vision Team, the CHT will recommend that the Vision Team take action. The CHT also has the authority to “nag.” Once a person or group agrees to be responsible for a piece of the Action Plan, a person from the CHT should monitor the progress of the action step to make sure it is moving ahead on schedule.

Your consulting contract includes coaching through December 28. Eddy is the coach for your Church Health Team. Your CHT chair should feel free to call or email Eddy at any time for help with the work of the team. If it would be helpful for Eddy to join the team by phone for a planning meeting, that can be arranged.

You’re off to a great start. But many churches have responded with a rush of energy following the consultation site visit, only to lose momentum within a couple of months. It is the responsibility of the CHT to insure that that doesn’t happen, that your implementation process stays on track.

MINISTRY RECOMMENDATIONS CHECKLIST

- ☐ Recognizing that discipleship takes place best in community, evaluate all the church's discipleship ministries in light of how well they nurture relationships that make disciples. How can you decrease your reliance on a classroom-based approach to discipleship, using classes as a valuable supplement to small-group-based strategies? What can you do to increase the effectiveness of your discipling ministries for adults, youth, and children?
- ☐ Develop ways to measure the effectiveness of your discipleship ministries that are not based solely on the number of participants. How will you measure how many disciples you have? (How will you define a discipling relationship?) How many disciplers?
- ☐ Ask your Fellowship Team to study the Connections Ministry handbook, *Welcome to the Family*. Next, they need to identify which pieces of the Connections Ministry are already in place and which ones need to be developed or strengthened. Ask them to prioritize which parts of the Connections Ministry they wish to develop and have fully operational within six months. Within 12 months. Provide accountability for progress in the development of this ministry.
- ☐ Evaluate all your outreach ministries in terms of how to maximize your opportunities to take the church to the community, rather than just asking the community to come to church. Where are the places in the community that you can turn into points of contact with the neighborhood?
- ☐ Develop ways to measure the effectiveness of your outreach ministries that are not based on the number of participants, but the number of relationships built. Decide how you will count relationships.
- ☐ Find a way to streamline your children's ministry so that you are doing fewer things but with greater energy and excellence.
- ☐ Consider steps to develop a culture of call-driven ministry rather than one of slot-filling. (Fully pursuing this goal may need to wait till you hire a Director of Ministry Development who can give leadership to this effort.)

Note: A key ministry recommendation is that you add a second worship service within the next year. However, that recommendation appears in the facility section because it is central to your facility usage strategy.

GROWING SMALL GROUPS

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How important are small groups?

In the New Testament church, the primary structure of the church was the house church. While several house churches occasionally came together for large group meetings, we don't know how often this happened. In contrast to today's North American church where large group worship is usually the primary gathering of the church and small groups are supplementary and optional, in the New Testament church, the small groups were the primary gathering, and the large group gatherings were probably less frequent and supplementary.

Whether the small group or the large group is the primary gathering for a church makes an enormous difference in the nature of church life, as the two settings serve different purposes. The large group gathering well serves the purposes of celebrative worship, Bible teaching/preaching, vision-casting, and public evangelism. The small group gathering best serves the purposes of community-building, mutual ministry, spiritual gift discernment and development, discipling with accountability, support and accountability for personal ministries, intimate worship, leadership development through apprenticeship, and relational evangelism.

If the large group setting is strong and the small group setting is weak, as the church grows the quality of relationships suffer, most people come to see themselves as receivers of ministry (consumers) rather than as ministers, and there is little discipleship in an atmosphere of accountability. Development of ministry leadership is hindered. When the small group setting is strong and the large group setting is weak, there may not be a strong sense of connectedness among the members of various small groups. It may be difficult to develop a shared vision among all the groups. The quality of Bible teaching may suffer.

Clearly, small group church and large group church complement one another, and each is stronger when the other church setting is functioning healthily.

Small group church has been at the center of renewal movements that have had lasting impact. The Wesleyan revival is a noteworthy historical example. The house church movement in China and the explosive worldwide cell church movement are impressive contemporary examples.

The imbalance of the North American church--emphasizing large group gatherings over intimate small group church--has crippled the North American church. It is probably not possible to restore health to the North American church apart from restoring the small group church as the primary setting in which the members of the church relate, or at least as a setting of equal importance with the large group gathering.

Single-purpose vs. holistic groups

The house churches of the New Testament were fundamentally different from most Christian small groups today. Most Christian small groups today are single-purpose groups--Bible study groups or prayer groups or ministry groups or fellowship groups or accountability groups. The house churches of the New Testament were the church. All the functions of the church took

place there--worship, prayer, the Lord's Supper, mutual ministry through the use of spiritual gifts, teaching, evangelism, and fellowship, including the Agape Meal. The house churches of the New Testament were intergenerational. Children learned about faith by watching the adults relate to one another in intimate Christian community. They learned how to worship, how to pray, how to forgive, how to minister by watching the adults.

While single-purpose groups can be excellent, they are too limited in scope to be the heart of the church. For the small group to be the heart of the church, all of the functions of church must take place in the group. This is where members find their primary experience of community. For many members, particularly those from non-Christian or nominally Christian families, this small group offers them a family closer and more supportive than any they have ever known.

How not to start small groups

An obvious--and common--way to start a small group ministry is to divide the congregation into groups. This has been tried various ways. Sometimes each elder is assigned pastoral responsibility for a specified list of families. The families may or may not meet together as a group, but the elder is to care for each family. Sometimes small groups are formed, perhaps geographically, and leaders are assigned to each group. These groups may meet in homes or at the church building as an alternative to a Sunday evening or Wednesday evening service. Some groups formed in this way thrive, but most struggle or die. Why? Because they are formed mechanically rather than organically.

A strong group is built on strong personal relationships, so a small group is healthiest if it grows along the lines of existing relationships. An elder who is assigned a "responsibility list" will be largely ineffective in giving pastoral care if those on the list do not feel close to the elder.

Groups started in this way also tend to be seen as another church program, not the essence of church, and are often viewed as optional and even burdensome. Small group ministries begun in this way tend to start with a bang, then shrivel up to a few hardy groups, or perhaps disappear entirely within a couple of years.

A better strategy

Because small groups are relational, they grow healthiest when they grow organically. Like a plant, they start small, grow, and reproduce. Rather than legislating or administering a small group ministry into existence, it is far more effective to begin with a single prototype group, experiment and tinker with it until you get the group DNA the way you want it to be, then reproduce that group. As groups multiply, over a period of years, eventually the majority of the church can be integrated into small group life. Because these groups will have grown along the lines of personal relationships, and because group leaders will have been apprenticed through the small group system, the relationships and leadership of these groups will be strong, and the small group network can be the heart of what it means for your people to experience church.

The prototype cell

A commonly used term for a holistic small group is a cell, because such groups grow much like plant and animal cells do. Just as a person's body grows from a single cell, a local church body can grow from a single cell. That original cell includes the DNA, all the elements essential to defining and forming a healthy body. If the DNA is faulty, the body will be handicapped in some way.

Because an organically grown small group system is not grown by adding new cells but by multiplying cells from the original cell, great care must be invested in defining the DNA of the original or prototype cell. While it is not impossible to correct some "birth defects," it is far more economical to prevent them. And some "birth defects" are, in fact, fatal, producing nonviable groups, and yet others produce sterile (non-reproducing) groups.

What are the elements that go into forming a healthy prototype cell? How can you determine when the DNA code is complete?

Different people may answer that question different ways, depending on their vision for small groups. But as a starting point, I'll offer some of my thoughts on what elements I think need to be part of the DNA of the prototype group.

Core values

A common mistake--one I've made--in launching a small group ministry is to focus first on structures and functions rather than on values. The problem with this is that structures and functions can be imitated and adopted without any deep commitment to the core values behind them. To bring together a group of people who are attracted to certain structures or certain ways of doing church, but who are not deeply committed to the spiritual values that drive the church is a recipe for a sterile (non-reproducing) prototype group.

What are the essential core values for a healthy holistic small group? Others may choose different (even better) ways to describe them, but these are the core values that I consider essential.

1. Relationship with God. The starting point for the Christian life is each person's personal relationship with God. A healthy small group will nurture each person's individual relationship with God through various means. A healthy small group will also be a place where the community as a group relates to God in corporate prayer and worship. An intimate relationship with God--a relationship of listening, obedience, growth, worship--this is the single most important thing the church is to nurture.

2. Relationship with one another. Growing out of our personal relationships with God comes the reality of Christian community. American Christianity has overemphasized individualistic Christianity to the neglect of Christian community. The Bible says that to come into relationship with God is to join the family of God. We cannot relate to God as Father without also relating to all the brothers and sisters. The Bible is full of clear teachings about how we are to relate to one another. Our love for one another (regardless of whether we find each other attractive) is to express itself as serving, accepting, honoring, bearing each others' burdens (sins), forbearing, submitting, admonishing, confessing, and more. Such intense community is largely foreign to American culture, but this *koinonia*--shared life--is what we are called to as citizens of the kingdom of God. In the holistic small group, or house church, we are to be living models of the kingdom of God, embodying the radically counter cultural values of our King. While we experience this community most intimately with those in our own small group, to a lesser degree we also experience it with others in our church body, members of other small groups and even other congregations. We are all family.

3. Relationships with those outside the church. We are not only to love God and each other; we are also to love those who do not yet know God. Our love for them, our compassion, compels us to reach out to touch them in ways that offer God's healing and comforting touch. Love does not distinguish between types of needs. Therefore, we offer emotional support, meet physical and financial needs, fight for justice on behalf of the oppressed, work for racial reconciliation, and invite people into a personal relationship with a loving, forgiving Savior. We do not evangelize simply because it is the duty of Christians to do so. We do not evangelize because we want the

church to grow. We share God's love in word and deed because we have fallen in love with people who need God's love. The result (not the goal) of this is that the family of God grows.

Many of us have retreated to within the Christian ghetto. We have few meaningful relationships with non-Christians. For those in this situation, it will take intentional effort to invest heavily enough in relationships with non-Christians that we can fall in love with them and therefore be able to reach out to them in love rather than out of a manipulative effort to convert them.

The holistic small group is an ideal setting for helping every member of the body discern what ministry or ministries God is calling him or her to, then providing ongoing support, encouragement, and accountability for the faithful performance of that ministry.

These three core values are organically related to one another. Ministry, the third core value, is the fruit. Community, the second core value, is the tree which bears the fruit. Intimacy with God, the first core value, is the root system of the tree. If the church (group) is not bearing fruit, the solution is not to more intensely exhort people to share their faith or feed the hungry. The solution is to first check the root system to see if people are rightly connected to God. Are they hearing God? Obeying God? Next, check the tree, the community of faith. Are people relating to God in healthy ways, obeying the "one another" commands of Scripture? If the root system and the tree are healthy, people will be listening to and obeying God, people will be building one another up, encouraging one another, calling out each others' gifts, and holding each other accountable to fulfill their calls to ministry. And fruit--ministry--will be the natural (actually, supernatural) result.

In forming your prototype group, it is essential that you invite only those people who are fully committed to these three core values (or the core values you have defined). Someone who likes the idea of small groups but is not committed to intimacy with God is not a good candidate. Someone who likes the idea of small groups but is not committed to radically biblical Christian community is not a good candidate. Someone who likes the idea of small groups but is not passionately committed to reaching out to unbelievers in love to meet spiritual, social, physical, and emotional needs, is not a good candidate.

And since the prototype group is the group from which others will be formed, all (or at least most) of the members of that prototype group should be those who are committed to--or at least open to prayerfully exploring--providing leadership in one of the new groups that will be formed from the prototype group.

Essential systems in a healthy small group

Systems is an un-flashy word, but the concept is essential to developing an approach to small group ministry that grows organically. Without healthy systems, small groups must be created one by one, by addition rather than multiplication, and the average health of the small groups will vary widely. Those that happen to have strong leaders will do well; others will flounder. In fact, even the addition of new small groups from time to time will be largely or entirely offset by the death of existing groups.

Just as the human body must have well-functioning systems to be healthy--a digestive system, a circulatory system, a reproductive system, a respiratory system, etc.--a holistic small group and the network of groups must have healthy systems if the groups are to be healthy, reproduce, and relate well to one another. If the prototype group multiplies before all these systems are developed in the group, the new cells will be missing these systems as well. It is not impossible to go back and add systems later (genetic therapy), but it is far preferable to give birth to cells that have a full complement of essential functioning systems from birth.

A healthy small group will have the following systems:

1. Mentoring/discipling. The small group must have in place a system for nurturing new believers and for providing support and accountability for all members. While the entire group can do this to a degree, this function is best served in smaller groups of two or three normally made up of people of the same gender. In these smaller groups of two or three, a greater degree of transparency and accountability is possible. Discipling has often been identified with a printed curriculum. While a printed curriculum can be a useful tool, the "core curriculum" of discipling is the life of the discipler. One structure designed to meet these needs--a structure which is simple and easily reproducible--is the Life Transformation Group described by Neil Cole in his book, *Cultivating a Life for God*. Such groups also serve an evangelistic function.

These pairs or triads are not in addition to the cell group but a part of the cell group. Therefore, time invested in the relationship with one or two other people outside the cell meeting strengthens the cell group rather than competing with it for time and energy. These strengthened relationships are brought into the cell group meeting, enhancing the intimacy and experience of community in the larger group.

2. Community-building. The leader of a healthy small group will know how to intentionally nurture community, both within and outside of group meetings. Mutual care will be part of the normal lifestyle of the group. People will regularly be sharing time, energy, money, and possessions to meet one another's needs, not out of a idealism, but as an overflowing expression of their love for one another. Observers will be inspired to say, as they did of the early Christians, "Look at how they love one another." Jesus said, "By this will all know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." These habits of mutual care will become part of the normal lifestyle of group members before the prototype group multiplies.

3. A reproducible meeting format. The prototype group needs to develop a meeting format that is easily reproducible in future groups regardless of the spiritual gifts of the group leaders. Obviously, every group will have its own flavor depending on its leaders and members, but if every group leader must re-invent the group process, that is a major barrier to the multiplication of groups. Working the bugs out of a prototype group is a huge job. If every group leader must go through that process, most will not succeed. They will end up with groups that limp along with only some of the essential systems in place.

For a small group to function as church, it must include worship, prayer, mutual ministry, teaching (though not necessarily lecture/preaching), vision-casting, accountability, fellowship, and outreach. All these elements need to be made part of the week-to-week rhythm of the group.

Of course, there should be freedom to depart from the "default" format as the Spirit leads, but a basic format that incorporates all the essential elements is an important starting point. Every present and future group leader needs to be comfortable with all the elements of the meeting.

There can also be freedom to develop special purpose groups. Having a standard reproducible format is not designed to limit but to empower. But if the exceptions become more commonplace than the rule, it is likely that the church does not truly have in place a reproducible meeting format, and this will probably be a barrier to the reproduction of healthy groups.

4. Leadership development. In this kind of ministry, the primary way of training small group leaders is through apprenticeship. One approach is to name one or two intern leaders in every group who are consciously preparing to become small group leaders when the group multiplies. These intern leaders increasingly participate in the leadership of the group until, shortly before the new group is spun off, the intern has almost full responsibility for pastoring the existing group. In my opinion, the first commitment of every group leader and intern leader should be to pray daily for all the members of the group. The intern leader not only learns to lead the meetings, but is trained in friendship evangelism, in pastoral care for the members during the week--every aspect of the group leader's ministry.

Leading a small group is a major ministry commitment, involving 3 to 6 hours a week outside the small group meeting. An intern, as he/she approaches the end of his/her training,

should be investing a similar amount of time outside the group meeting. Of course, to free leaders to give this priority to pastoring a small group, they should not be asked to make other time-consuming ministry commitments in the church. Obviously, a church that makes it a priority to have most teens and adults in holistic small groups will need to make this one of their two highest ministry priorities. Other programming will have to be streamlined or discontinued to enable leaders and participants to give small groups the priority they must have to provide participants with their primary experience of church.

Also, the ministry team is not limited to the group leader and interns. Other ministry roles are often designated--worship leader, children's ministry coordinator, host. The effective group leader will make the building of a ministry team a top priority. The team will work together to plan meetings, clarify vision, and develop ministry strategies. An effective team will always be greater than the sum of its parts. That is, together they will be more effective than each of them would be ministering as individuals.

5. Small-group-based evangelism. Friendship evangelism must not simply be something people are exhorted to do; it must be made part of the normal lifestyle of the life of the group. Most of us belong to churches where intentionally sharing our faith is the exception rather than the rule. In a healthy cell, most of the members of the cell are intentionally engaged in relationships with unbelievers for the purpose of sharing God's love. The group meetings will include coaching on faith-sharing as well as weekly opportunity to report on ministry relationships. I suggest reserving about 15 minutes near the end of the meeting for ministry reports. When most members of the group are reporting every week on how their relationships with their non-Christian friends are developing, the culture of the group becomes one where faith-sharing is normal rather than strange.

Events to which unbelieving friends can be invited to form relationships with other group members should be a regular part of the life of the group. Some of these will be activities in which the whole group is involved. Others may involve just 2 or 3 families. The entire group accepts responsibility for praying for and reaching out to those who are on the "care list" of other group members.

6. Discipling children. A small group does not have to be intergenerational to be healthy, but intergenerational groups best capture the New Testament model and probably offer the single best strategy for incorporating children into the life of the church. Children need community just as much as adults do. The most effective discipling of children comes from seeing children as members of the church community, not as children of community members.

Including children in community does not mean that they have to be present for everything. When children are present for everything, it tends to reduce the level of what happens to what children can understand and what will hold their interest. Therefore, I believe it is usually best for children to be included in a time of intergenerational worship, prayer, and sharing, and then to have a separate community time of their own, preferably led by adult and teen members of the community. This is an important time for building community between these adults and the children. Some groups like to have the children return for a closing activity in which they share something they have done or learned in their time together.

If the group is not to be intergenerational, the group should develop an intentional, biblical strategy for discipling children and come up with a practical plan for child care during the small group meeting. Even if children are not involved in every meeting, children can be involved in meals, fun nights, and other activities, and experience a healthy connection to the adults in the group.

7. Coaching/coordinating group leaders. As soon as two groups exist, it is important to have in place a system to provide ongoing coaching and support for group leaders. In my opinion, the coach should regularly (perhaps once a month) visit the meetings of the leaders he/she is coaching. The coach should also meet weekly with each leader he/she is coaching, even if it

must be by phone sometimes. In this meeting they should go over the previous week's meeting, what worked, what didn't, how it could be improved. They should review ongoing ministry to families in the group as well as ministry to those the group is reaching out to. Because of intensive coaching, a new group leader does not have to be "fully trained" before beginning to lead a group, because he/she knows that when he/she runs into a situation he/she is not prepared to handle, the coach can walk him/her through it. That is, essential aspects of the training take place on the job, after the group leader has assumed leadership.

There are various systems for structuring coaching networks. Each has its strengths and weaknesses. It is up to each church to select the one best suited to its needs or to adapt existing models to make them better fit the church's situation.

Effective coaching of small group leaders may be the single most important factor in the capacity of the small group ministry to keep multiplying.

Of course, the coaches themselves need to receive adequate support and mentoring, normally from a church staff person with expertise in this area.

8. Outside training. While the primary training of leaders is through apprenticing and coaching, there is also a need for outside training through workshops or seminars. These can be provided by church staff or through national organizations or both. Why is this important? Because if the only training a leader gets is from his own mentor, the leader is likely to adopt the leader's weaknesses as well as strengths. This more objective training provides a corrective to this tendency to develop genetic defects due to "inbreeding." The church may want to develop training events (retreats, workshops) as part of the intern-training process.

9. Designed to multiply. There are different ways in which a group can multiply, but it must be a part of the genetic code of every group from the beginning that it is designed to multiply. Ideally, every small group should be "born pregnant." That is, if an intern system is being used, the group should have an intern (the leader of the group that will be birthed by this group) beginning with its first meeting. Another structure called "Groups of 12" (G12) involves the parent group continuing to meet to provide community and ministry support while each of the group members plants and leads a new group for ministry/outreach. If a group becomes ingrown and is not reaching out, the coach needs to intervene to reorient the group toward outreach and multiplication.

After the prototype

It requires enormous time, attention, creativity, and trial and error to develop a healthy prototype group. But, as with a prototype car, once the prototype is working well, you can put the model into production. Once the process of reproduction is working well, new groups can be birthed, grown, and reproduced much more quickly and with far less energy than the original prototype group. But for this to happen, the core values must always be kept central in every group, and all the essential systems must be replicated in every group.

If the prototype group has been developed in an existing congregation (rather than as a church plant), how do groups grow? By word of mouth. If exciting things are happening in the prototype group, if people's lives are being changed by God's power, people will be standing in line to get into the groups. This is a good problem to have, so long as people don't have to wait so long that they become discouraged.

In starting new groups within an existing congregation, take care to not fill the groups with church people. Leave some growing room in each new group so the group can grow through evangelism. If the groups are entirely filled with church people, you will have the illusion of healthy growth as church people clamor to get into the groups, but once all the church people have been assimilated into the multiplying groups, what you will have is a lot of groups that do not have small-group-based evangelism programmed into their genetic code. Since the groups

will not be evangelizing, they will grow only as people come into the church through other doorways. Far better is to make the small group a primary doorway into the church. It is far easier to get someone who has joined a small group to come to large group worship than it is to get someone who has visited large group worship to join a small group.

Even in the best of circumstances, these systems require constant maintenance and fine-tuning. Issues of how the small group ministry relates to the other ministries of the church are critically important. There is no one right set of answers, but some answers work well and others do not. This is an area where a great deal of work is being done right now, and the models that are promoted as state of the art in this year's seminar may be superseded by a new model or at least major improvements in the old model by next year's seminar offered by the same trainers. Church leaders that become too attached to a given methodology may feel betrayed by the pace of change, implementing the newest thing only to be told that by the time of implementation, it has become outdated. It is therefore important for those guiding this process in the local church to deeply understand the principles and dynamics of this process and be prepared to adapt methods and structures as necessary to achieve the end result. Structures must constantly be passing the test of functionality. (Wouldn't it be great if we would constantly subject all our church structures to that test and change them when they fall short?)

Favorite resources

Where can a church that is early in this process turn for training and guidance? I have several favorite resources.

Books

* *Radical Renewal: The Problem of Wineskins Today* by Howard A. Snyder. I first read this book when it came out in the 1970s under another name. It revolutionized my understanding of the church. It is basically a biblical study of the nature of the church with special attention on what implications the church's nature has on its structures. This isn't a how-to on small group ministry, but it is wonderful theological background--the why-to.

* *Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Ministry* by Carl F. George. I consider this to be the best single training manual available for your small group leaders, as well as a major part of the blueprint of designing your small group ministry. Unlike many other books on small groups, this one treats fellowship, evangelism, and equipping leaders through apprenticing all to be essential elements of a healthy holistic small group. This is why I recommend it above others.

Training events

* Touch Outreach Ministries (1-800-735-5865; www.touchusa.org) offers the most training events for those involved in small group ministries. They offer training for the church staff and small group coordinators, for small group leaders and intern leaders, for small group coaches (the level of oversight between church staff and small group leaders), and for doing intergenerational small groups.

* DOVE (www.dcfi.org) also has training events that come highly recommended (I haven't been to one yet), but they are more narrowly targeted to churches that have embraced the cell church model.

* ChristCare Groups (www.stephenministries.org) are a ministry of the well-known Stephen Ministries. With its roots in the Lutheran church, ChristCare works primarily but not exclusively with mainline churches, and so "speaks the language" of mainline churches better than some of the groups that have more the flavor of evangelical culture.

* Serendipity (www.serendipityhouse.com) publishes excellent curriculum for small groups and also offers training to small group leaders. They have many trainers throughout the country.

Consultants

* Dr. Richard (Dick) C. Meyer is a long-time Presbyterian pastor who now devotes full-time to resourcing churches in the area of small group ministries. Small groups were key to his approach as a pastor, and he has written two books on "one anothering." Contact:

The 1 Anothering Institute
 Dr. Richard C. Meyer
 6631 S. 171 Circle
 Omaha, NE 68135
 402-891-1787
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* Most of the training organizations listed in the previous section can provide consulting services in this area.

* While we are not interested in duplicating or competing with the excellent training others provide in this area (we have our hands full trying to do those things that only Living Stones does), your Living Stones Associates team may be able to assist you in developing your small group ministry. Our involvement may take the form of staff coaching, leading a retreat focused on small group ministry, or doing on-site training related to small group ministry. This option may be called for when none of the other training options available seem to be a good fit for your church and you need an event that is customized to your needs. Staff coaching may be a valuable supplement to other training events.

More resources

* Touch (1-800-735-5865; www.touchusa.org) publishes an extensive catalog of resources for cell groups, including many they publish and many from other publishers. This includes books for leaders, training videos, seminars on audiocassette, curriculum for intergenerational cell groups, and much more.

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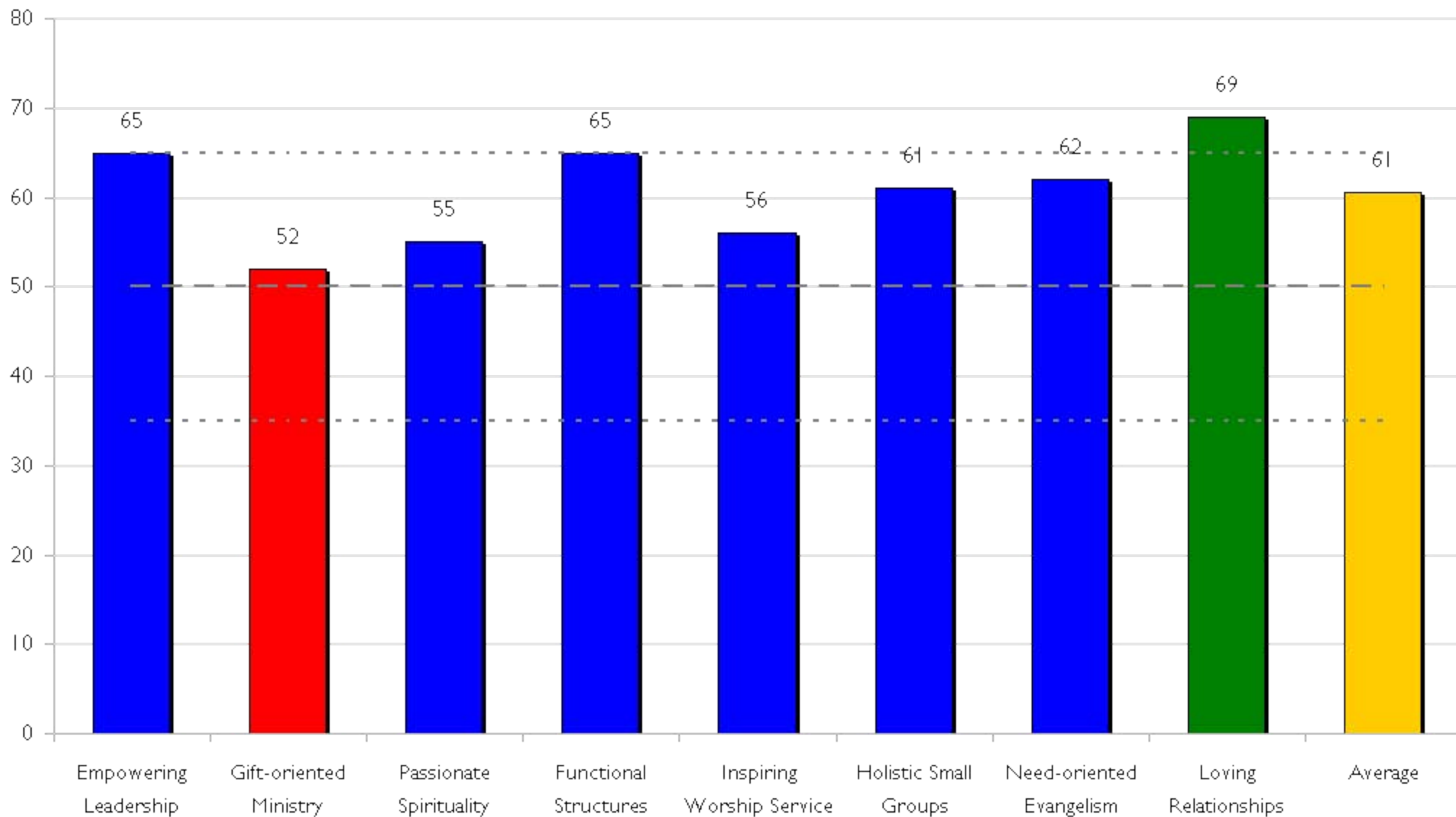
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Quality Characteristic Current Profile

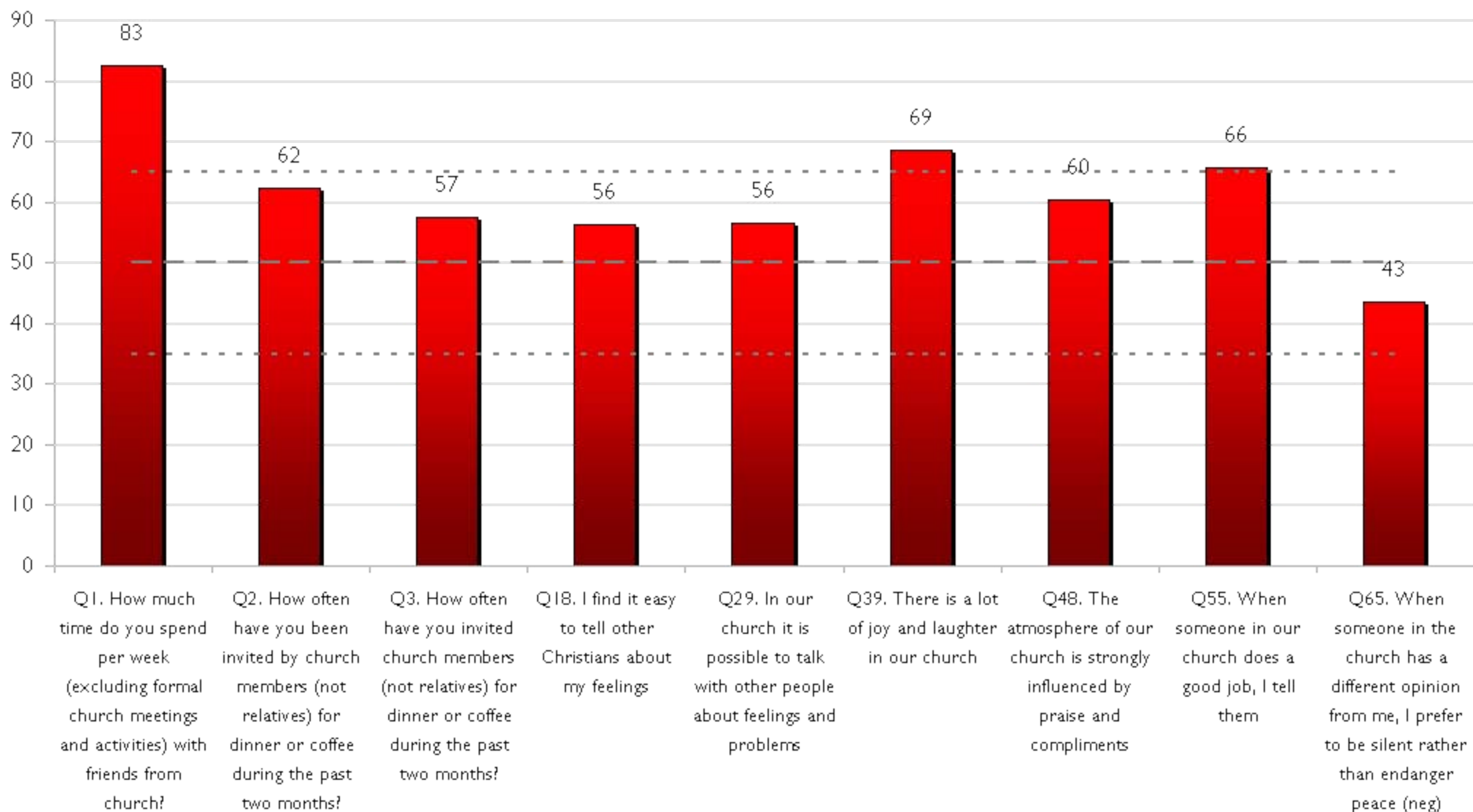
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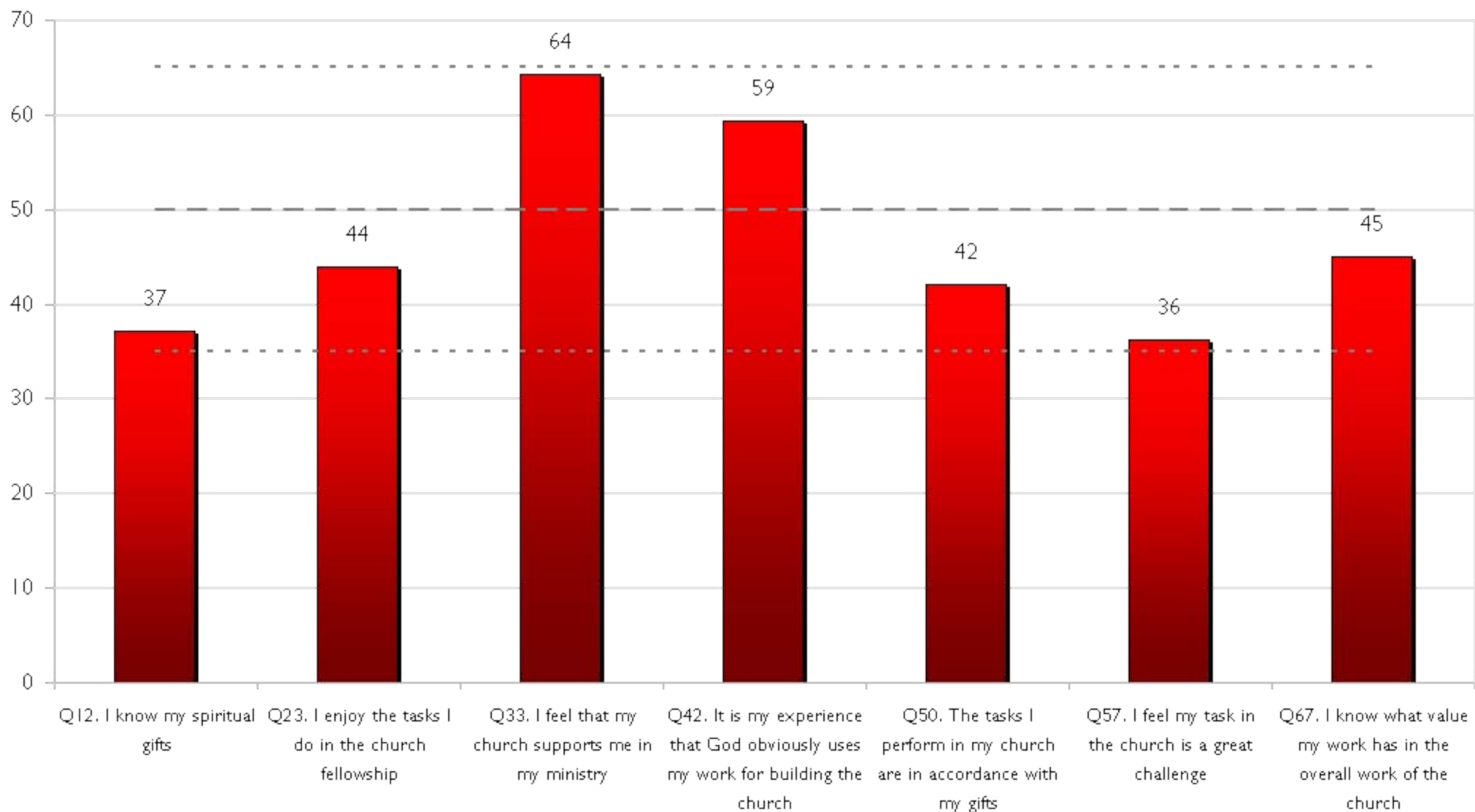
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Gift-oriented Ministry Current Profile

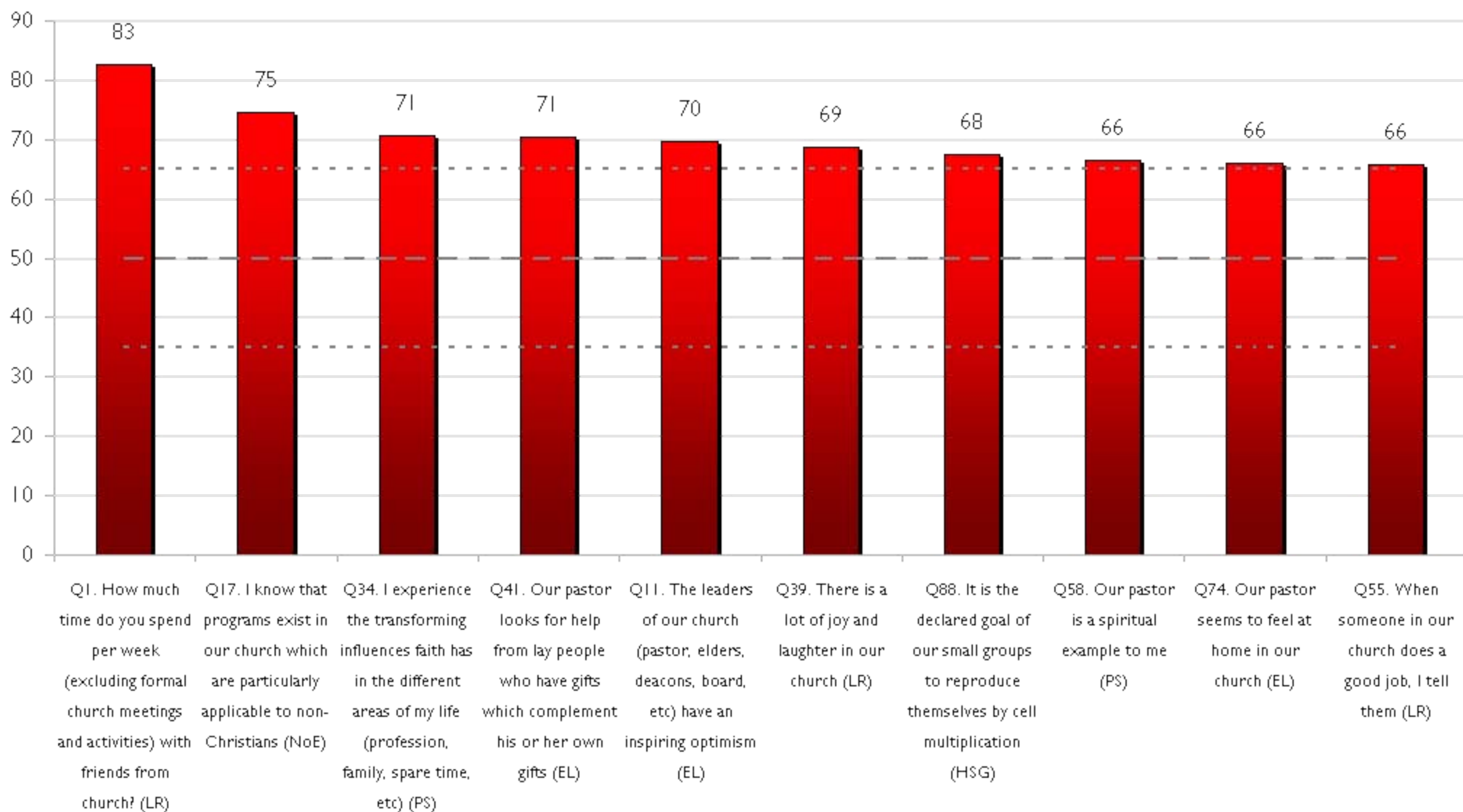
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Current Highest 10

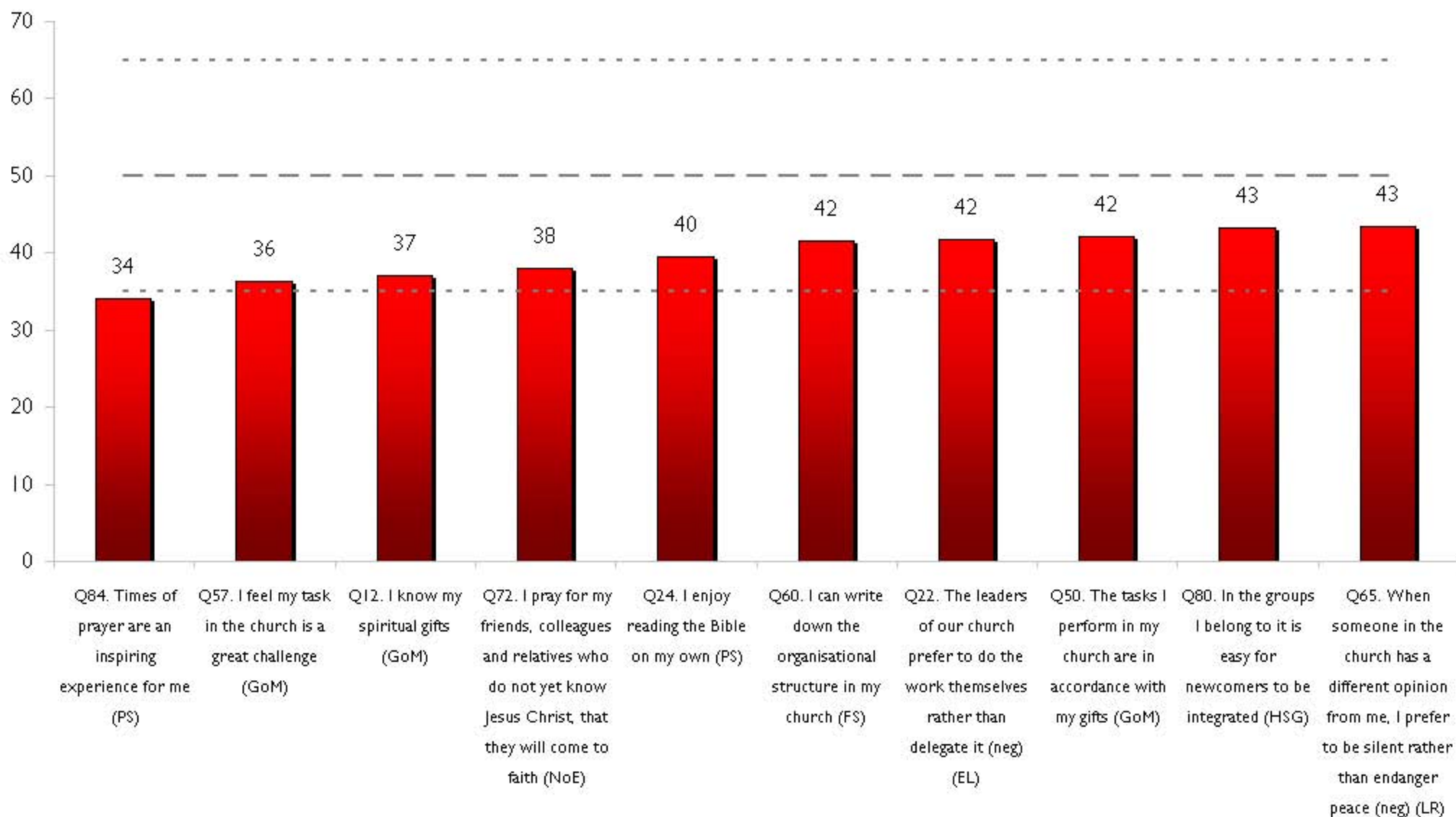
■ Highest 10
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Current Lowest 10

■ Lowest 10
- - - Low (35)
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- - - High (65)





STAFFING

A biblical basis for staffing

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12, NRSV).

This familiar passage teaches us a couple of key principles about ministry roles in the church. First, every believer is called to do the work of ministry; ministry is not for the special few. Second, God has called some within the church to a specialized role, the role of equipping others for ministry. These equippers are not more important; they just fulfill a specialized function for which God has given them gifts. The other members of the body likewise are all gifted by God to fulfill ministry roles to which God has called them.

Understanding these two principles is foundational to developing a biblical approach to church staffing. They have two important implications for how we staff a local church:

1. We are not to hire staff primarily to “take care of us” or “to do ministry on our behalf.” Rather, we are to hire staff to equip the rest of us to do the work of ministry. The traditional image of a pastor in America is the image of a caregiver. Paul is telling us that this is a distortion. Yes, pastors are to be caring people, but their job is not to be the “ministers” to all the members of the congregation, but rather to equip all the members of the congregation for ministry, which includes caring for one another. In fact, one of the most important responsibilities of equippers in the local church is the nurture of caring communities in which people are equipped to be caregivers for one another.
2. Because God has called certain among us to ministries of equipping, it is important that the church recognize these equippers and empower them to devote themselves to the specialized ministry to which God has called them rather than expecting them to do caregiving, secretarial work, or facility work. This principle is illustrated by the appointment of the seven in Acts 6 who were chosen to free up the apostles for “prayer and the ministry of the word.”

Now, we know that not all equippers are paid church staff. You can name people in your own congregation who have a ministry of equipping others for ministry, and this is as it should be. But when we hire pastors to work on staff, we need to be clear biblically about what their job is and what their job isn't. This is the starting point for a biblical and optimally effective approach to church staffing.

The other primary category of church staff is support staff. The role of support staff is to support the equipping staff in ways that free them to be equippers. There are two primary categories of support staff—office staff and facility staff.

Staffing needs

We believe that the staff of Hillcrest Baptist is one of your greatest strengths. Pastor Tim has a love for your church and neighborhood and is committed to personal growth as a leader. We believe that Tim will grow with the job as the church grows. Rich has a real heart for ministry and has a teachable spirit. We believe Rich is also growing rapidly and will only become more fruitful as time goes on. We also heard that Jayne has brought much-needed skills to the office.

We believe Jayne has more to offer the church and that you would be wise to make fuller use of her skills, particularly in the area of church calendar and communications.

One of the things you asked us to help you with is in clarifying a staffing plan that will help you take you into the future. These recommendations are listed in order of sequence, beginning with the most immediate.

Director of Worship Arts

While we did not speak with all the members of your worship team, those who filled out questionnaires for the self-study as well as those who met with us all expressed frustration about the lack of clarity and focused leadership. We believe that addressing this issue is your most urgent staffing need.

Right now you are paying three part-time accompanists for their work with the music ministry. With rare exceptions, we recommend that when people are giving less than ten hours a week to ministry leadership in the church, that leadership be provided on an unpaid basis. Many members of Hillcrest are investing 5 to 10 hours a week in ministry without any thought of being paid for their time. As a general rule, we do not believe the church's music ministry should be any different. We realize there may be times when the church does not have a particular accompanist available on a volunteer basis and it may be necessary temporarily to hire an outside professional accompanist to fill in, but this should be the exception, not the rule.

We are therefore recommending that you adopt a policy of not paying accompanists who are being asked to serve less than ten hours a week. We further suggest that you combine the funds being used for these three accompanist positions into a single salary, and use those funds to hire a part-time Director of Worship Arts. A possible job description for this position is at the end of this section. You will want to adapt this to meet your specific needs and to reflect the gifts and experience of the person you hire.

We are recommending that you plan to launch a second worship service sometime within the next year. We believe having this person in place is a necessary prerequisite to launching your second service. In fact, ideally, you would want to have this person on board for at least three or four months before launching your second service.

When you hire this person, it would also be good to increase your office manager hours by about five a week to provide five hours a week of office support to this staff person. However, Jayne may be able to provide five hours a week of office support to your Director of Worship Arts by delegating some of her present responsibilities to volunteers. She believes she has several tasks that could be regularly done by reliable volunteers. You'll want to work these specifics out with her.

Nursery Coordinator

This is one of those rare positions where we sometimes recommend employing a person for less than ten hours a week. For some reason, this seems to be an unusually difficult position to fill adequately with volunteers once a church reaches a certain size. Yet, especially in a church such as Hillcrest where your growth strategy is to reach out to families with young children, this is a critical ministry. You cannot afford anything less than excellence in this area.

This does not have to be an expensive position. Probably 6 to 8 hours a week is all you will need at this point, probably increasing this by a couple of hours when you add your second worship service. A general job description for this position is found at the end of this section. We recommend you fill this position this fall.

Facility Manager

You are still using a system of relying on volunteers to maintain and repair your facilities. The system of having a volunteer team maintain the facility is appropriate for a small church—a church of under 100 in average worship attendance. But you have long since reached the size that a volunteer system is not adequate to keep on top of repairs. The fact that you have multiple buildings, all of them older, to maintain, compounds the need for staffing this area.

While you will continue to use volunteers for work projects that call for teams, we recommend that you hire a part-time facility manager. Probably 10 to 12 hours a week should be adequate provided you continue with your present custodial staff at the same level.

A job description for this position is also included at the end of this section. We recommend you fill this position within the next year as funds are available.

Director of Ministry Development

You are approaching the time when you will need to expand your equipping staff. You do not yet have the funds for this position, but we believe you may be able to shift money from the facility portion of your budget to the staffing portion within a year to eighteen months by becoming debt-free within that time. That will provide you with the funds you need for at least a part-time Director of Ministry Development. It would be good to have this person in place by the time your average worship attendance reaches 250 to 300.

Hiring the right person for this position is critical to the next phase of your growth. It is better to take longer and hire the right person than to get in a hurry and hire someone who is not strongly qualified. A generic job description for this position is found at the end of this section. You will need to tailor it to your needs and to the gifts, experience, and passions of the person filling the position.

Office staff

If you hire someone half-time for the Director of Ministry Development position, you will need to provide about ten hours a week of office support for this position. This will require hiring a second part-time secretary since Jayne is not interested in full-time work (unless you have a different secretary at that time who is interested in full-time work.). When this person goes to full-time, you will need to provide about 20 to 25 hours a week of office support for this position.

Growth capacity

Once you have all these staff members in place, you should have adequate staff to grow to double your present worship attendance—about 400 to 425.

STAFFING RECOMMENDATIONS CHECKLIST

- ☐ Adopt a policy of not paying accompanists who work less than ten hours a week. Combine the salaries of your present three accompanists to create a part time position of Director of Worship Arts. Hire this person as soon as you find the right person, preferably before the end of 2005. This person should be in place for a few months before launching your second service. Provide this person with five hours a week of office support.
- ☐ Hire a nursery coordinator for a few hours a week as soon as you identify the right person.
- ☐ Hire a facility manager for about 10 to 12 hours a week within the next year as/when funds become available.
- ☐ Hire a Director of Ministry Development within the next 12 to 18 months, likely starting out part-time, but increasing to full-time as the church grows. Plan to fund this position primarily by eliminating your debt and reassigning the funds that are now going to debt payments to be used for staffing.
- ☐ When you hire the Director of Ministry Development, also hire office support staff to support this person, about 10 hours a week for a half-time position, 20 to 25 hours a week for a full-time position.

DIRECTOR OF WORSHIP ARTS

Part-time

The Director of Worship Arts will be responsible to give direction to most or all aspects of corporate public worship including music, drama, video production, technical services (sound, lighting, etc.), and staging. This includes both regular weekly worship and special programs.

This person is not responsible to personally lead each ministry team related to worship arts, but is responsible to build strong teams, such as bands or praise teams, drama team, technical team, staging team, etc., and to provide the coaching and support necessary to empower those teams to be effective in their ministry.

Also, keep in mind that when this person first begins this position, it will not be possible to simultaneously develop all these ministry teams. For example, the first priority may be to develop two strong praise teams. Developing a drama ministry may have to wait.

Qualifications

1. *Lead worshiper.* Since this person gives leadership to your ministry of worship, his or her primary responsibility is to be your lead worshiper—a person who leads the congregation into the presence of God by example. This is more important than musical ability. If the person does not have this ability, you have the wrong person.
2. *Team builder.* Since you are not hiring this person to single-handedly lead your worship ministry, but rather to build several teams of people who will all contribute to your worship ministry, this person must be an effective team builder. The only way to know if a person has this ability is to look at his/her track record. Does the person have a history of having built effective teams, whether on the job, in the church, or in volunteer work?
3. *Developer of leaders.* Each team will have one or more leaders, and a key element of this person's responsibility is to mentor these team leaders and help them to grow in effectiveness as ministry leaders. How do you identify someone who is good at leadership development? Track record. Look for someone who has helped the people around him or her become more effective leaders in present or previous responsibilities.
4. *Musical ability.* Because this person will give primary oversight to the church's music ministry, this person must have musical ability to be able to give visionary leadership to this area. Your Director of Worship Arts may lead one of your worship teams, but he/she would not have to. Your Director of Worship Arts may be a lead singer, but does not have to be. Your Director of Worship Arts may or may not lead a choir. Your Director of Worship Arts may or may not personally lead the drama ministry. All of these roles are optional for this person, depending on the person's particular skills and interest. What is not optional is an ability to recognize the right people to build these teams and to coach them in the process of becoming effective ministry teams.
5. *Abilities with other aspects of worship arts.* Experience in drama, sound and lighting systems, and staging are all a plus for this position. Whether skills in each of these areas is considered a necessary qualification for the position or as optional will depend on the needs of the local church.

NURSERY COORDINATOR

Part-time

The nursery is one of the most strategic ministries in the church. The quality of care in the nursery is often the deciding factor in whether a family, visiting for the first time, decides to return for a second visit and eventually make your church their church home.

At the same time, more American churches seem to struggle to staff this program area than any other single area. This may be in part because churches tend to ask their best care givers to be nursery coordinators, yet being great with children does not necessarily translate into being the right person to lead the nursery department. This position calls for skills of vision, leadership, and team building as well. It is because so many churches struggle to staff this area adequately that in this area we make an exception to our general rule of not paying ministry leaders who work less than ten hours a week for the church. In this area, to get the consistency needed to maintain quality and focus, it seems that in many churches a paid nursery coordinator is the best solution.

Nursery workers can have an amazing impact on the lives the children they care for, and can also have a powerful ministry to the parents of those children. The effectiveness of this ministry depends largely on the vision and passion of the Nursery Coordinator for this ministry.

Responsibilities

1. Build a team of nursery workers that consists of people who love and truly enjoy caring for children.
2. Lead the nursery ministry team in making prayer an essential dimension of their ministry. You might pray together for the children before they begin to arrive. Train your team to pray for the children as they hold them, as they sleep. The impact of healing prayer on emotionally troubled children can be amazing. Pray for the parents as they worship or attend their class, small group, or other activity.
3. Nurture a team spirit among the nursery workers so that they experience their work as being part of a team, not simply as a worker who fills slots. This means giving attention to scheduling workers in such a way that the same workers often work together.
4. Ensure that, except in case of rare emergency, children are cared for by at least one or two workers whom they know. In young children, security depends on being with a familiar person with whom they are bonded rather than with strangers.
5. Develop a culture of family ministry among the nursery workers, modeling for them and encouraging them to build relationships with parents, including spending time with the families outside the nursery setting.
6. Maintain a nursery schedule that gives serving the families priority over the convenience of the nursery workers. For example, if nursery care is provided during small group meetings from 6 to 8 p.m., staff the nursery from 5:30 to 9:00 so that parents are free to drop off their children in time to get to group a little early and so they are free to visit afterward without feeling a need to hurry back to the nursery to pick up their children. Personally work in the nursery and personally supervise the team at least 2/3 of the time the nursery is open.
7. Schedule nursery workers for all regular services, classes, and activity programs where it is needed, and for special events as requested.
8. Make sure that a background check is provided on all nursery workers before they serve, and provide training for all nursery workers, primarily through mentoring.
9. Make sure the nursery rooms are clean and well-maintained, reporting any needed attention promptly to the facility team for correction. Make sure the environment of the rooms is bright (colors and lighting) and welcoming.
10. Administer a system of secure check-in and check-out for children.

11. Administer a user-friendly system of paging the parents of children who are in distress who need parental attention.

Depending on the size of the church and the amount of programming, this position will usually require 6 to 12 hours a week, but may require as many as 20 hours a week in a larger church with extensive programming. Hours will vary from week to week depending on programming.

FACILITY MANAGER

Part-time

Goals

An effective facility manager will ensure that:

- The facilities always look loved (not neglected) and that they are warm and welcoming, especially to guests.
- The equipping staff and ministry leaders are not distracted from their ministries with facility work, such as set-up and tear-down of rooms, cleaning, and locking and unlocking buildings.

Supervision

The facility manager is responsible to oversee any other facility staff (custodians, grounds crew, snow removal crew, etc.), volunteers who work on the facilities, and contractors and service professionals who are hired to work on the church facilities. The facility manager reports to the senior pastor in churches with relatively small staffs, and to the church administrator in a church that is large enough to have one.

Responsibilities

The facility manager is responsible to either do the following tasks or to oversee their completion by the employees and contractors who report to him/her.

- *Routine cleaning.* Every room should be cleaned thoroughly once a week and at least spot cleaned after every use. A room that is used five times a week should be cleaned five times a week.
- *Carpet cleaning.* Church carpets exist to be used, not protected. Plan to use carpets hard, and replace them every few years. The church should either contract with a carpet cleaning service for regular cleaning of carpets or should purchase its own carpet cleaning equipment and have its own facility staff clean the carpets.
- *Set-up and tear-down.* Facility staff should be responsible to set up not only for regular weekly activities, but also for weddings, funerals, seminars, and so on. An office staff person should maintain a schedule of all room use and provide the facility manager weekly with a list of all activities to take place in the facilities, along with instructions for how each room is to be set up. Equipping staff and ministry leaders should not be expected to set up for their own meetings or ministries. When quick set-up is needed for large groups (such as setting up for a dinner after church in space that is used for worship or classes during church), the facility manager should develop a system for leading volunteers in setting up the room.
- *Minor repairs/maintenance.* The facility manager should have the skills needed to make minor repairs and perform routine maintenance on the building.
- *Supervision of repair professionals and contractors.* The facility manager should be knowledgeable in hiring repair professionals and directing their work.
- *Grounds care.* The facility manager has oversight for lawn and garden care and for snow and ice removal for sidewalks and parking.
- *Security.* The facility manager is responsible for care of locks and security systems, and for oversight of locking and unlocking the building. Pastors should not be expected to remain at the church following events to lock up. The facility manager should arrange for others to do

- this. If the church employs security guards, they report to the facility manager.
- *Purchasing.* The facilities manager is responsible for administering the budget for cleaning, maintenance, and routine repairs. The governing board determines the size of the routine purchases the facility manager can make or authorize. Larger expenditures (such as major repairs) require the approval of the trustees or governing board.

Qualifications

- The most obvious qualification is that the facility manager must have a good working knowledge of how to maintain facilities as detailed above.
- It is equally important that the facility manager be a good supervisor of other people—staff, contractors, and volunteers. People with skills in this area often have a strong spiritual gift of serving. However, a person whose dominant gift is serving does not make a good supervisor. The motto of the Server is, “It’s easier to do it myself.” A person who is wired like that may make a great custodian or even a maintenance person, but is not the right person to be a facility manager. A facility manager must be a good manager of others.
- If possible: A love for the church. It is possible to hire an outside person to be the facility manager who will approach it just as a job, and you may be satisfied with that person’s performance. But if you can find a qualified person who will also serve out of love for the church, you will have far less turnover in this position.
- Flexible schedule. The ideal candidate for this position will have a flexible schedule that will allow him/her to be at the church morning, afternoon, or evening, weekdays, or weekends, as needed to cover set-up and tear-down, locking and unlocking, cleaning between events, etc. At those times when he/she cannot be there, he/she will arrange for another facility staff member or a volunteer to cover the need.

Caution: Beware of hiring any facility staff (or any other staff for that matter) out of a motivation of providing employment to a needy person or family in the church. Yes, a church has a responsibility to help those in the body in need, but hiring them for a job for which they may not be fully qualified is the wrong answer. Hire the best qualified people you can find for your facility staff, then use other means (such as a sharing fund) to help families in need. Hiring a member of the church for a job for which he/she is unqualified or only marginally qualified almost guarantees future grief, as people are dissatisfied with the cleanliness or condition of the facility, but feel they cannot complain for fear of hurting feelings.

JOB DESCRIPTION

DIRECTOR OF MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT

FOCUS

1. Direct the development of a Connections Ministry that facilitates the process of newcomers becoming fully integrated into the church body, from the moment of their first visit until they are full participants in small group life and personal ministry.
2. Implement and oversee a system of recruiting, training, and continuing coaching for small group leaders. Seek to increase participation in small groups and the quality of small group leadership until 80% to 95% of all pastoral care in the congregation is being handled by small group leaders and intern leaders.
3. Implement equipping ministries to make all the youth and adults in the congregation aware that God has called them to be ministers, to deepen their understanding of the nature of ministry beyond traditional roles in the church, to guide them in identifying their personal calls and identifying spiritual gifts, to facilitate the formation of ministry teams, to provide a support system for the nurture of ministry teams, and to provide through the local church or outside resources training for a wide variety of ministries so every member can be well-equipped for ministry.
4. Guide the development and implementation of a comprehensive church-wide system of leadership development.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1. Facilitate the formation of a Connections Ministry Team and guide the team in the development and implementation of systems to help newcomers make four key connections:**
 - Every guest to the church who does not prefer to remain invisible will not leave the campus without making a friend—a person who knows his/her name and will be delighted to see him/her on the second visit.
 - Every guest is followed up by a non-staff member by phone or with a doorstep visit within 48 hours.
 - Each newcomer is incorporated into a small group of some kind within 6 weeks of the first visit.
 - Each new attender is incorporated into service with six months (preferably much sooner) of the first visit.
- 2. Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for equipping members for ministry.** (See Focus statement #1.) This will include the development of a "core curriculum" which all adult members will be urged to complete and which all new members will complete as part of coming into membership. The core curriculum should include practical teaching on lay ministry (such as *When There's No Burning Bush*), and on identifying spiritual gifts and call.

Eventually this should also include a clearly defined process by which self-organizing ministry teams can be birthed and nurtured along with the staff support for these ministry teams.

3. Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for small group life. This person will develop a system for training/coaching small group leaders, for recruiting intern leaders, and for multiplication of groups. Training of small group leaders should involve a combination of on-the-job training as intern leaders, regular (weekly) meetings with a coach, some formal training in the local church, and probably some small group leadership training at workshops outside the local church. The person will personally equip and coordinate the coaches of small group leaders who will in turn equip and supervise the small groups leaders. This person should also lead the church in making small groups entry points for people coming into the church teaching/showing small groups how to do small-group-based friendship evangelism.

4. Develop and implement a system for individualized call and gift discernment and assistance as needed in ministry placement. Whether through small groups or through a team of trained volunteer counselors, each member of the congregation will be invited to work at a guided process of identifying personal call and spiritual gifts. These people will then be offered assistance as needed in matching their gifts and call to existing ministry opportunities within or outside of the church, or, if a good match doesn't exist, will be coached and assisted in the process of creating a ministry that will allow them to fulfill call. The goal of this process is not to "fill the slots" in the church's existing structures, but to enable people to do ministry that is motivated by their own personal sense of call.

5. Develop and implement a comprehensive, church-wide system for leadership development. This person, together with a Leadership Development Ministry Team, will research resources and equipping strategies and develop equipping tracks for governing board members, church staff members, interns, ministry leaders, and emerging leaders. An excellent resource for beginning to think through a church-wide equipping strategy is *THE LEADERSHIP BATON: An Intentional Strategy for Developing Leaders in Your Church*.

NOTE: This person should not be hired to take over the work of your Sunday school superintendent, your Christian education council, or any other group that is administering existing programs, nor is this person responsible to recruit people to fill positions.

QUALIFICATIONS

1. Passionate vision for every-member ministry. This person must believe passionately that every member of the church is called to ministry and have an compelling desire to mobilize all the people of the church for ministry, helping each find his or her place of call in ministry either within the church or in the community.

2. Experience in holistic small groups. Since this person is responsible to guide and oversee the church's small group ministries, he or she needs to have significant experience and expertise in this area. If the person has a strong commitment to small groups but no formal training in how to develop a church-wide small groups ministry, the church can pay for this person to receive appropriate training shortly after assuming the position.

3. A demonstrated commitment to friendship evangelism. This should be a person who is consistently and intentionally building or nurturing friendships with non-Christians for the purpose of ministry to them, and who does this in a winsome, non-offensive way.

4. A track record of empowering leadership. This must be the kind of person who inspires

others to be all they can be, to be willing to take risks without being paralyzed by fear of failure. This person should have a record of enabling others to fulfill their potential.

5. A layperson's perspective. In most cases the best candidate for this job is not a career pastor. The first place to look for this person is within your congregation.

6. An entrepreneurial management style. Often this person is in business and has a record of helping those he or she supervises to achieve remarkable results. This person may be an entrepreneur and must at least think like an entrepreneur. This person's management style must reflect creativity, not a preference for maintaining the status quo. This person must thrive on innovation and starting new ventures, and he or she will probably be bored with maintaining a project once it is up and running. He or she must have demonstrated expertise in coaching others through the start-up phase of new ventures.

7. Teaching ability. Since equipping is at the heart of this role, this person must be a strong teacher whose teaching style emphasizes clear practical application, not abstract theory. Other people should be attracted to this person's teaching. While this person may be asked to teach occasionally during a worship service, especially when the church is focusing on lay ministry, preaching probably should not be a high time priority for this staff position.

8. Ability to resource other staff members. This person is not the only member of the staff responsible to equip members for ministry. In a church with other associate pastoral staff, this person can be an "equipper of equippers," equipping other staff members to become more effective in their equipping ministries. For example, this person could work with an Associate Pastor for Children to help her or him to equip all those in the church who work in ministry to children. This can include assistance in testing for spiritual gifts, in matching people to the positions that fit their calls and their gifts, in advising on possible restructuring of ministry programs so the programs better make use of the available gift mix, or streamlining programs when the number of "slots" exceeds the number of people who are gifted and called to a given ministry. This person can also work with associate staff in helping them to guide the birth and operation of self-organizing ministry teams in their areas of responsibility.



FACILITIES

Growth capacity of present site

You asked us to determine the capacity of your present site—how many people can be on site at a single time? In your case, the limiting factor is not the meeting space in your building, but the parking. You have enough parking capacity to handle about 200 people on site at one time. Your worship center can handle more, and if you were conducting worship and classes at the same time, you could probably get 350 to 400 people in your facilities at the same time. But your parking limitations do not make that practical.

Expanding your parking

You have considered options for expanding your parking. You have considered eventually demolishing the annex building and placing parking there. You have considered purchasing up to four properties behind the church, removing those homes, and turning those properties into parking.

If you did all these things, you could probably increase your parking capacity by about 50 cars, which would increase the capacity of your site by about 100 people. The cost of doing this, including the cost of the annex property, the cost of the four lots, the demolition or removal of the buildings, and the paving and striping of the parking spaces, could cost in the range of \$750,000, which comes to about \$15,000 per parking space. That is very expensive parking!

If that was the only way you could accommodate growth, you might have to bite the bullet and do that, but to adopt this plan is to virtually guarantee very slow growth for the church, because the rate at which you could afford to buy these properties and convert them to parking would be very slow. It would be surprising if you could accomplish this conversion of all these spaces to parking in less than 10 years. And during those 10 years, the money invested in parking would siphon off funds needed for staffing and ministry, which are what drive the growth of the church.

As we walked around the church, though, we did see some possibilities for modestly expanding your parking in cost-effective ways.

1. Ask leaders to park remote. We know you have done this in the past, but it may be time to ask for renewed commitments. We noticed that only one car was parked at the annex although there was room for five. There is a lot of on-street parking available within two blocks of the campus. If all ministry leaders would park a block or more from the church, that would, in effect, “create” more parking for others.

2. Designate guest parking. If a guest drives through your parking lot and can’t find a parking space, there is a good chance the guest will keep on driving. (One church we worked with videoed this happening in their parking lot to dramatize for the members the importance of providing adequate parking.) But, so long as you have empty guest parking spaces located conveniently to the main entrance, you will not have this problem. Designating guest parking insures that no how many regular attenders show up, you will still have prime space available for guests. The rule of thumb is to designate about two more spaces than you expect to actually use.

3. Explore creating parking spaces in the space behind the building to your west. Behind the building that houses the temporary agency and sandwich shop, there is a small fenced area that is unused. We suggest you approach the owner of this building and offer to pave this area for them

to use as customer parking during the week and for the church to use for parking on Sundays. This area is large enough for 5 or 6 parking spaces.

4. *Bar parking.* Just to the west of this, on down the alley across Terrace Avenue, is a bar that is closed on Sunday mornings. It has about 12 to 15 parking spaces. We suggest you talk to the owner of this bar about using these parking spaces. You would need to put up a sign on the Terrace Street entrance on Sundays, directing people to “Hillcrest Baptist Parking.” Offer to pay rent on these spaces. Use your parking needs as a way to build relationships with your neighbors.

5. *Annex property.* In the facility section of this report, we recommend that you sell the annex property as the building is more of a liability than an asset. Our understanding is that one possible buyer is the city, and that the city’s most likely use for this property would be to convert it to parking. We recommend that you explore the city’s interest in this property. If they are interested, we suggest you include in the purchase contract a provision for the church to use this property for parking on Sunday mornings. You might need to provide a modest discount on the price in exchange for this use. If the city would pay to demolish this property, put in the parking, and maintain it, and if they would let you use it for Sunday morning parking and pay you for the property to boot, that is a win/win. You get out of debt and you still get your parking spaces for less than it would cost you to do it yourself. Of course, this is a best case scenario, and it may not work out, but it doesn’t hurt to check it out. We estimate that 15 to 20 parking spaces can be placed on this property.

If all three of these were to work out, you might be able to increase your parking capacity by 30 to 40 spaces, increasing your campus capacity by 60 to 80 people.

Optimal congregational size

In this day of multiple services, with many churches holding two or three worship services and some holding 15, 20, or more, an important question is raised: If our church is to consist of multiple congregations, what is the optimal size for each congregation. While there is no single right answer to that question—different churches have different preferences—the most common answers fall in the range of 250 to 600. Even some churches that run thousands in weekend attendance consist of multiple congregations that range in size from 250 to 600.

If I (Eddy) were to be the senior pastor of a church, I believe my preference would be to have a worship space that seats about 300. That space would be comfortably full at 250. My plan would be to grow multiple congregations of 250 rather than to try to grow one or two congregations to a larger size. Why? Because I believe that once a congregation grows beyond 250, it begins to feel impersonal.

The average person who has attended a church for a long time will personally know 60 people in that church. That number holds true whether it is a church of 100 or a church of 1000. So, growing a congregation larger does not mean that members will know more people. It does mean, though, that a higher percentage of the people they worship with will be strangers.

This is especially important in how newcomers experience the church. If a newcomer visits a church of 1000, he or she might come 5 or 6 Sundays in a row without ever running into someone he or she met on a previous Sunday. In a church of 250 or less, a newcomer is almost sure to see someone he or she met the first Sunday on each subsequent visit. In which setting is the newcomer more likely to quickly feel at home? Obviously, it is easier to make friends in the smaller group than in a large group.

We also think the smaller group is more conducive to building community among regular attenders. Hillcrest Baptists greatest strength right now is Loving Relationships. If there were 1000 people attending your worship service, chances are that score would not be as high. But, if

you had 5 worship services with 200 people attending each one, it is possible you would be able to maintain that high score.

For these reasons, we do not see the capacity of your site as a problem. We believe it is an excellent size. With the addition of some or all of the other parking spaces mentioned above, you will be able to comfortably accommodate 250 to 275 in your building on an average Sunday, and you can accommodate larger groups for special occasions. Rather than seeing this as a problem, we suggest you accept this as a gift, and work with the reality that your campus will be able to comfortably accommodate 250 or so people at a time.

Growth through multiplication

You will accommodate growth, then, not by expanding the capacity of your single service, but by multiplying the number of services. Some of these services can be at your present site. As you grow beyond two services, you may hold services at several sites. Some churches are now holding multiple services at five, six, or seven sites with multiple services at each location. With this kind of strategy, Hillcrest Baptist has the potential to grow to several thousand in weekly worship attendance. If you fail to do that, it won't be because meeting space was a limiting factor. Other factors will have stopped your growth.

Probably the easiest way to add a second service is to add a second Sunday morning service. In some ways, the transition from one service to two is the hardest. Why? Because you are making the transition from being a single-congregation church (in which everyone meets together) to being a multiple-congregation church. To ease this transition we recommend that you be very intentional about keeping the two congregations connected. How can you do that?

1. Provide a 30-minute fellowship time between services. One of the keys to a smooth transition to two services is to provide a time between services where those leaving the first service can visit with those arriving for the second service. Encourage people to see this as a ministry event for the purpose of community-building with each other and with your guests. This is not just "down time" between services. For guidelines on how to plan and lead this ministry event, see the Connections Ministry handbook (*Welcome to the Family*) enclosed with this report.

2. Move most Christian education to another time. You cannot have this schedule if you have Sunday school between the two services. In most churches, the way we handle this is that we suggest that Sunday school be held at the same time as one or both of the worship services. That is not a good solution at Hillcrest Baptist because you do not have enough parking to accommodate worship and Sunday school simultaneously. It's possible you could do this temporarily (if, for example, you had only 100 in each worship service). However, if you handle the transition to two services well, you can expect an immediate increase in attendance of about 15%, or 30 people per Sunday. And, given how healthy the church is, growth is likely to continue after that once the capacity limit is removed by adding the second service. So, we suggest you consider a time other than Sunday morning for your Christian education ministry.

This does not mean that you cannot have *any* Sunday school classes. In fact, we recommend that you give your senior adult classes the option of meeting on Sunday mornings. They can attend one worship service and attend class during the other service. The number of people involved in this would be few enough that it should not create a parking problem, at least not for some time.

The reason we recommend this is that we find that for many older adults, a Sunday school class often serves as their "small group," as their primary community. It is important to encourage and strengthen this community. You want to avoid undermining it if possible. For most of the people in your congregation, small groups that meet in homes, restaurants, etc., are equally or more effective than classes for building disciple-making communities. Everyone

doesn't have to use the same approach. The principle is to encourage everyone to be part of a disciple-making community

One good option for children's ministry would be to combine your children's Sunday school with your Pioneer Club, taking the best elements of both and your most passionate workers who are called to work with children, and to create a single new children's ministry to meet at the time that works best for you (Wednesday night, Sunday night, etc.). Earlier we mentioned that your children's ministry is spread too thin, trying to pull off three church-wide programs for children (Sunday school, children's church, and Pioneer Club). By doing less, but doing it with greater excellent, you will improve the quality of your ministry to children and alleviate your problem with exhausted children's workers.

You may want to make this change in your Sunday school/children's ministry programming at the same time you make the transition to two services.

3. Staff for two services. Two services require more preparation than one. The greatest weight of this falls on your music ministry. We do not recommend that you have a single praise team or band to lead worship at both services. Where churches do that, the praise team is always stretched to the limit. One option is to have a different worship team for each service, which is the way to go if you want to have different styles of music to connect with different audiences. Another option is to have two or more teams who take turns leading worship for both services. The advantage of this is that a single rehearsal prepares for both services. This approach works only if the music at the two services is virtually identical.

Because doing multiple services well requires multiple worship teams, as churches transition from one service to two, it is often advisable for them to hire a part-time Director of Worship Arts. The complexity and time involved in preparing two worship services a week is typically more than a volunteer can handle with excellence.

Realize that staffing for two services is a way to accommodate growth without spending money on a larger facility. It does cost money to staff for multiple services, but the cost of staffing multiple services is only a fraction of the cost of buying or building a larger facility to accommodate that growth. Because the multiple-service approach cost so much less than the larger-building approach, churches that pursue the multiple-service strategy have the potential to grow much faster than those that follow the larger-building approach.

4. Conduct frequent inter-congregational events. The greatest fear people will have in going to two services is that they will lose their connections with their friends who attend the opposite service. This is a legitimate concern, not to be dismissed. It is important to be intentional about providing ways to keep those connections intact. Here are some ways to go about this:

- A. Have all-church worship services at least three times a year.* Plan two or three joint worship services a year, perhaps at Christmas, Easter, or for fall kick-off. As you grow, you will not be able to fit the crowd in your building. Wonderful! Rent space at a local school, theater, community center, or civic auditorium for these special events. Use these as outreach opportunities, inviting friends and neighbors to a special Christmas, Easter, or Thanksgiving program.
- B. Hold all-church social events.* Have all-church dinners several times a year—in a park, in the parking lot, or in borrowed or rented space. Consider an all-church retreat.
- C. Connect congregations through ministries to children and youth.* Vacation Bible school will be a great way for people from the two congregations to connect. Presumably, in the near future, you will continue to have a single session of children's ministry, perhaps on Wednesday or Sunday night. That will be a great place for people to connect. Families

from both congregations will still connect through youth group activities and through outreaches such as Hilltop Hoops.

- D. Connect congregational with small groups and ministry teams.* People who attend different worship services can still be in the same small group together. When you form teams for service projects or mission trips, those teams should include people from both congregations. Teams that work in neighborhood ministries such as your food pantry should come from both congregations.

“Go” versus “come”

Most American churches approach the question of growth by asking, “How can we get more people to come to church?” It is a campus-centered mind-set. We build our buildings, put on our programs, and try to recruit people to come to them.

While it is fine for you to bring your friends to church with you, we would like to suggest that a more important question is, “How can we take our church to the neighborhood?” You have already been doing this effectively in several ways. We encourage you to build on these successes by being even more intentional in making this your primary strategy.

This may mean, for example, looking for more opportunities to take ministries to children and youth off of the church grounds into other locations in the neighborhood, especially highly visible locations frequented by children and youth. It may mean moving more of your discipleship ministries for adults out of classrooms on the church campus into homes, restaurants, and offices throughout the neighborhood. In the future it may mean conducting worship services at two, three, four, five, or more locations throughout the neighborhood.

When using multiple worship sites, each site will have a live worship team and worship leader. Some sites may also have a preacher who is there in person. Others will use large screen video for the sermon. While some churches do this live, the trend seems to be toward recording an early service then using the DVD for later services so that synchronizing the services is not an issue. In the early days of multiple-site services, there was a fear that people would experience the video venues as second rate. That fear has proven to be unfounded. While some people still prefer the room with the live preacher, it seems that an equal or greater number prefer the large screen. So, for many worshipers, the video venues are the venues of choice.

As a way to become familiar with multi-site worship, we recommend that you consider taking a team of your leaders to the upcoming multi-site worship conference in Chicago on October 24-25 (<http://www.multi-site.org>). We believe this paradigm unlocks the future growth potential of Hillcrest Baptist in a way that dovetails powerfully with your mission of neighborhood ministry.

As you can see, if you did almost nothing to your present facilities except maintain them, this approach to facility use that focuses on multiplying congregations and moving more and more ministries into different places in the neighborhood removes the physical limits of growth for Hillcrest Baptist. But, that doesn’t mean that you should not do some things to make your building a better ministry tool.

FACILITY NEEDS

In several ways, your facility is a less than optimal ministry tool.

- *Nursery.* Your nursery facilities would benefit from being brighter (both lighting and color). It would be better if your infant and toddler nursery were connected. Improved access to a rest room from within the nurseries would be helpful. You do not now have a check-in counter or a check-in system for security to make sure that children leave only with people

who are authorized to pick them up. Your facility plan needs to address as many of these issues as can be addressed in a cost-effective way.

- *Children's ministry.* The fellowship hall, which is your primary children's ministry space, has a couple of major drawbacks. First, the space is not very suitable for active play. Second, this room also serves as a hallway giving access to the two classrooms behind the fellowship hall, as well as to the kitchen. It also has room for improvement in the interior decorating department to become more welcoming to children.

Your children's classrooms also have room for improvement. The rooms on the third level do not have windows (though they did have windows years ago). One of the two children's classrooms behind the fellowship hall serves as the hallway to get to the other one (plus both of these use the fellowship hall as their hallway for access). Your facility plan needs to resolve these issues.

- *Youth ministry.* Your teens are meeting in the annex building, which is not good quality meeting space for teens. They need a better place to meet.
- *Foyer.* Most of your foyer has been eaten up by offices. It is too small to function well as a foyer. In addition, when a first-time visitor first enters the building, it is unclear where to go. Even the entrance to the auditorium is not visible. You need a larger foyer and a more visitor-friendly entrance.
- *Rest rooms.* You are well aware that your rest rooms are inadequate. The primary women's rest room can only be accessed by walking through a classroom. You may be accustomed to walking through a classroom when a class or meeting is in session to get to the rest room, but many visitors will not be willing to do that. You need rest rooms that are visible and easily accessible from the foyer, and that are modern and handicap accessible.
- *Handicap access.* Your building consists of several levels, and a handicapped person finds it challenging to navigate between the levels, enough so that it is likely that some handicapped people stay away from church because they know it will be hard to get around the building. You need to include an elevator in your long-term facility plan.
- *Offices.* Your offices are taking up space that should be part of the foyer. In addition, Rich is isolated from the other offices, and you don't have a convenient office entrance. (Visitors have to push a doorbell, and then Jayne has to come to the front entrance and unlock it.) Nor do you have room to expand your offices to accommodate future staff. You need an office plan that will bring your staff together, provide a welcoming office entrance and reception area, and provide growing room for the future.
- *"Family Life Center."* In your self-study, you expressed an interest in a Family Life Center, a large open multi-use area for recreation, meals, and other activities. We believe you would benefit by making such an area part of your long-term plan.

FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Immediate steps

- We recommend that you put the annex property on the market. If it is possible to do so in such a way that you retain the right to use this space for parking on Sunday morning (assuming the space is going to have some parking on it), you should do so. We believe that this property is more of a liability than an asset to the church, and that you should use the proceeds from this sale to reduce your indebtedness.
- We recommend that you explore alternative meeting space for your teen ministry. If you can locate teen-friendly space within a few blocks of your church campus, you may wish to rent that space. If you find a space very close, it could possibly be used for Sunday school as well as for youth group meetings on Wednesday.

- We recommend that Rich's office and the infant nursery trade places. This will get Rich closer to the other offices and will bring the two nurseries closer together.
- We recommend that you actively pursue partnership with the other food pantries and various other social services in the neighborhood, developing a neighborhood ministry center that can better serve the needs of your neighbors. We understand such discussions are already underway. Approach this as an opportunity to strengthen this ministry to your neighbors and to make it more holistic. Provide strong support, both with finances and with people, continuing to invest in this as a core ministry of Hillcrest, but in a more collaborative way. As a part of this, relocate the food pantry to a new facility used by the collective group. We understand that it is possible that a location may become available for this within a block of the church.

Phase 1: Children's ministry (within 12 months)

We recommend that you renovate your fellowship hall to make it more suitable for children's ministry. These renovations should include:

- Raising the ceiling as high as possible. This may involve painting or spraying exposed ductwork, etc. Be sure to use materials that are durable so that this space is suitable for balls and other active play.
- Replacing light fixtures with impact-resistant fixtures.
- Building a partition a few feet out from the west end of the room to protect the coffee counter from balls, and also to provide a corridor for people to be able to pass through to the kitchen with minimal distraction to children meeting in the room.
- Decorate the room to make it brighter and more inviting to children, including doing something creative with the columns in the room. You will probably be best served by hiring an interior designer who works with children's spaces to guide you in this.
- We recommend that the west classroom behind the fellowship hall be converted to a choir room. This room has access to the choir loft through the back stairway, making this the ideal place for a choir room. Use this for music storage as well as gathering before worship.
- We recommend that the east classroom behind the fellowship hall be converted to storage. This can be used for storage related to multiple-use of the fellowship hall, as well as for storage related to the stage area (accessed through the choir room).
- We recommend that your east "wing" (balcony area) be converted to classroom space for your elementary age children. All three classes can meet in this area. Purchase high quality supply cabinets on casters (from a school furniture supply company) to both store Sunday school supplies and to serve as portable dividers between the meeting areas of the three classes. Or you can purchase portable dividers and build in permanent supply storage space in this room. This arrangement gives you the option of doing some activities as a large group (all elementary together) and to do other activities in smaller classes. Unless you have students with hearing loss, using the open classroom layout should not cause any problems with children being able to hear. (It is a problem if you have only two classes in a space, but if you have three or more, it works fine.) By using portable furniture in this space, the space remains usable for other uses throughout the week. Decorate this space to make it inviting to children.
- We recommend you relocate your sound booth from this wing to the floor level, the back row of your worship space. You will probably need to remove a few chairs for this. This is actually a better location for your sound booth, and it frees this "wing" space for use by the children's ministry.

- As a part of your renovation, purchase new lightweight, adjustable-height, folding tables for your children's classes. Also, replace any chairs that need to be replaced with lightweight chairs.

Estimated cost for Phase 1: \$50,000

Trigger point: Proceed as soon as funds are available without borrowing.

Phase 2: Offices, youth, and nursery (within 24 months)

- Once you have relocated the food pantry to another location, we recommend that you remodel that building. We recommend that the front 50% to 60% of the building be converted to offices. Guidelines for layout of your office area are included at the end of this facility section.
- The back section of this building can be meeting space for now. As the church grows, offices can expand into this space.
- We recommend you reopen the windows on this building, and that you put a patio area along the length of the back of this building with some patio tables. Two or three steps along the entire length of this patio going up to the parking lot will provide a place for people to sit. You will lose five or six parking spaces with this patio, but will also turn an eyesore area into an attractive gathering space, and will make the rear entrance of this building welcoming.
- One option is to use this back room as a meeting space for youth.
- Once your offices are relocated to this building, we recommend that you remove the office where Rich is right now (and where we are recommending that the infant nursery move temporarily), making this part of the foyer. Create a new entrance into the men's rest room from the foyer.
- Enlarge the nursery by incorporating into it the hallway that is now between the nursery and the men's rest room. Leave a door between the nursery and the rest room so that nursery workers can take children to the rest room without having to go through the foyer.
- Create an infant area in the nursery that is separated from the toddler area with a partial wall, so that toddlers don't step on infants who are on the floor. By having only a partial wall, nursery attendants are able to watch children in all parts of the room. Since you should always have at least two workers in each nursery room, this room layout means that you do not have to have four nursery workers all the time.
- The space next to the men's rest room that is now a closet (I think it says "trustees" on the door) can be remodeled to become a check-in center for the nursery. Children will check in their children at this counter, and the children will be carried into the nursery. Parents will pick up their children at this counter as well. This will greatly improve security. This also makes it much more obvious to visitors where they are to bring their nursery children.
- We also suggest you remove most or all of the offices from the foyer area once your offices are relocated to the present food pantry building. You may want to keep one room for use as a serving kitchen and storage area to serve the foyer. Once you have opened up the foyer in this way, it is possible it will be large enough that you can have some or all of your coffee time in this space.
- As a part of your foyer remodel, consider changing the entrance to the women's rest room so that it is accessed directly from the foyer rather than through the Fellowship classroom.

Estimated cost for Phase 2: \$100,000

Trigger point: As soon as you have the funds to do this without increasing debt.

Phase 3: Community plaza (5 to 10 years)

To make optimal use of your campus, we recommend that you demolish the dental building and the apartment above it, and that you build a community plaza that will join your worship center with the food pantry building (which at that point will be your office building). The drawings at the end of this section represent how this community plaza will relate to the two existing buildings.

This will be a two-story high open space, about 80' x 40', with glass all across the Broad Street front side so that people outside can see what is happening inside. That makes this space effectively “outdoor” space, making it part of the neighborhood. We recommend that the back (parking lot) side of this include glass-paneled garage doors so that people can see clear through this space, and so that the space can be opened up to the parking lot, making this space truly an extension of the outdoors. Most people will enter the building through the parking lot side of this community plaza.

This space will include handicap accessible restrooms for men and women on both the ground level and the second-floor level. It will also include an elevator that will provide access to all four levels of the building—ground level, worship center level, balcony level, and “third floor” classroom level. It will also have a staircase leading to the third floor level.

This fellowship foyer will flow into the existing foyer, creating a large open foyer area.

On the west end of the fellowship foyer, a serving kitchen will be created so that this space can be conveniently used for coffee time on Sunday morning as well as for meals. The serving kitchen will be designed so that it also doubles as a break/lunch room for staff in the office area.

A large storage room behind the staircase will provide storage for tables and chairs needed for serving meals in this area.

This area will be the most multi-use and probably most used space in the building. It can be used for recreation for children’s and youth ministry. It can be used for classes and seminars. This space will be the “family life center” you have been envisioning, except that it will be far more used than a conventional gym because of its strategic relationship to the other buildings and its functioning as your main entrance and foyer.

We do not recommend that you build a traditional gym. Our experience with churches is that the one space churches build that they are most often dissatisfied with is gymnasiums. Most churches with gyms find that that space is greatly underutilized, and churches often ask us for ideas for how to convert their gyms to more usable space. The main problem with a gym is that it is not cost-effective to subdivide gymnasiums. Gyms also present acoustical challenges that often limit their usefulness as multiple-use space.

You already have your outdoor basketball court, which is the right location for your Hilltop Hoops program. We understand that you have access to other gymnasiums in your neighborhood. We recommend that you make use of these as part of your “go” strategy, and that you build your family life center in the form of this community plaza. We believe you will get far greater value from this design than you would get from a gymnasium, and you will be able to conduct many of the recreational activities in this space that you would be able to hold in a gym.

Estimated cost for Phase 3: \$800,000 to \$1,000,000

Trigger point: We believe that before you will be able to build this without it being a financial drain on your staffing and ministries, the church will probably first need to grow to 400 to 500 in average weekly worship attendance. Once you complete Phases 1 and 2, invite people to keep giving to a growth fund for future building, but keep your focus on the ministries that grow the

church spiritually and numerically. Perhaps in 5 to 10 years, you will have the resources to proceed with this addition to your building.

We recommend that you build when you can do so for cash or almost cash (a note of no more than three years which does not negatively impact your capacity to staff).

Yes, this is a very cool building concept, and it will be exciting to have it, but keep clearly in mind that you don't have to have this building to grow. With your multi-site strategy, you could grow to 1000 without having this building. So, don't let this building become a higher priority than it deserves to be, taking funds needed for staffing and ministry. If you do that, the building becomes a barrier to growth rather than an asset.

Facility Task Force

Authorize the Facilities Task Force to review these recommendations, then research the options, resulting in schematic designs and detailed budgets for the first two phases. (The dollar figures provided above are a rough estimate.) The task force will present specific proposals to the Vision Team for approval, including budget and time line. Once the budget is approved for a phase of the facility improvements and the funds are available, the Facilities Task Force should be empowered to oversee the construction process without the Vision Team's ongoing involvement in construction-related operations or decision-making. Only unforeseen major developments in the process (such as the need to substantially change the budget) should require additional board action. By assigning the campus development to a focused group, the equipping staff and other ministry leaders can continue to focus their energies on ministry.

FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS CHECKLIST

Immediate

- ☐ Switch locations for Rich's office and the infant nursery.
- ☐ Expand parking as practical utilizing the low-cost options outlined.
- ☐ Put the annex property on the market.
- ☐ Locate other meeting space for your teens.
- ☐ Pursue cooperation with other Hilltop church food pantries and social action ministry to develop a more holistic neighborhood ministry center at a central location. Relocate the food pantry to this new location.
- ☐ Within a year, start a second worship service and move your children's Christian education out of the Sunday morning time period, and possibly to another site.

Phase 1: Children's ministry (within 12 months)

- ☐ Renovate the fellowship hall.
- ☐ Convert the classrooms behind the fellowship hall to choir room and storage.
- ☐ Move elementary age classes to the east "wing."
- ☐ Purchase new furnishings for the children's classes.
- ☐ Relocate the sound booth to the main floor.

Phase 2: Offices, youth, and nursery (within 24 months)

- ☐ Remodel present food pantry building to serve as your office building plus a meeting room, which may serve as your youth meeting space.
- ☐ Remodel nursery and foyer.

Phase 3: Community plaza (5 to 10 years)

- ☐ Demolish dental building. Build community plaza multi-use space connecting present worship center to present food pantry building (at that time, offices).

Facility Task Force

- ☐ Charge your Facility Task Force with developing detailed cost estimates and drawings for Phases 1 and 2, and submitting a proposal for remodeling to the Vision Team for approval. Once the project is approved (either as two separate phases or as a single project), the

Facility Task Force should be charged with overseeing construction without coming back to the Vision Team for further approval unless there are major changes in the nature or scope of the project.

GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH OFFICE LAYOUT

1. Placement of reception office

The first question I usually ask when deciding how to arrange the church offices is, “Where should the reception office be?” A good location for a receptionist office:

- a. Is located just inside the office entrance.
- b. The “office entrance” can be either the main (worship) entrance or a separate entrance, so long as it is easily identifiable by weekday visitors as the office entrance and there is adjacent parking for office visitors. Of course, the office entrance should be handicap accessible.
- c. Ideally, the reception office should be located so that the receptionist can have eye contact with office visitors when they first enter the outside entrance to the office, and so the office visitors can immediately see the receptionist and know where to go. It also enhances building security if the receptionist can monitor who is entering the building. Achieving this may require cutting a large window in a wall or installing a glass door or partial glass wall.
- d. Multi-use reception space. In some churches, either because of configuration or because of the need to maximize limited office space, we are recommending converting foyer space (either the main foyer or a secondary foyer) to a multi-use space that serves as a reception office and waiting area during office hours, but that serves as a foyer at other times. Lockable office furniture, perhaps an armoire, that is attractive, yet that can protect the computer and other office records from the curious, may be helpful. When this is done, the receptionist often is not able to share an office, although if this area is large enough, more than one work station can be placed in this area.
- e. Signage. The office entrance should be clearly marked so that someone entering the church parking lot for the first time will know where to go to pull up to the office entrance. The office entrance itself should have office hours clearly posted. If the location of the reception office is not self-evident, signs should clearly direct the office visitor to the office area.
- f. Ideally, the receptionist should be located so as to serve as a gatekeeper for equipping staff. That is, office visitors should not be able to have direct access to pastors or other equipping staff without first checking it (or at least passing through) the reception office. This is least important in small churches. Once a church reaches 200, not observing this can become a significant problem. By the time a church reaches 350, this function of the secretary becomes critical. Obviously, for the receptionist to be able to perform this function for all equipping staff, all equipping staff must be in the same administrative area.

2. Waiting area

A waiting area for office visitors, either inside or just outside the reception office is important for welcoming. Comfortable chairs, reading material, a relaxing environment (plants, etc.), convenient drinks, etc., should be planned for this area.

3. Offices for support staff

If the church has more than one office support staff person, usually two or three will work out of the reception office. I find that if I ask office support staff members if they would rather have private offices or a shared work space, the great majority prefer shared work space. Exceptions: financial secretaries need private space so giving records can be secured and so that visitors to the office will not be able to see giving records lying on someone's desk. Also, administrative assistants who need to be able to do computer work that is best done without interruption sometimes prefer a private office. I ask. Of course, the offices should not be designed just for present staff, but also for future staff.

4. Work room

An adequate, well-equipped workroom is at the heart of a functional office. This room needs cabinets for paper and office supplies, countertop space for work surfaces, and office equipment: copier, printers, scanner, fax, folding machine, paper cutter, etc. Small churches often put office machines in the secretary's office. While this may be necessary in some cases, when possible, even in small churches, it is better to have a separate workroom. Why? Because the noise caused by folding machines and some copiers is great enough that it makes phone conversation difficult. Also, even in small churches, it is good to have a work space for volunteers other than the secretary's office.

When the church reaches the size that a production secretary is needed (often the third office support staff member to be hired), this person's work station will typically be in the work room. The work room is also a prime possible location for work stations for unpaid ministry leaders. We recommend that every church have at least one such work station, equipped with phone and computer terminal, and with filing space available. In larger churches, there should be multiple work stations available for unpaid ministry workers.

The work room should connect directly to the reception office, other support staff offices, and (if applicable), the office manager or administrator. Ideally, all these offices should have direct access to the workroom (without going through a hallway).

5. Administrator

The title "church administrator" is used to identify a wide range of job descriptions. In one church, the administrator was really an associate pastor who was not identified as such because he was divorced, and that was a taboo in that church. In other cases, the administrator is really a secretary. Usually, the administrator is a hybrid—part equipping staff and part office support staff. Assuming the administrator has direct supervision of the office support staff (the most common arrangement), the administrator will probably have a private office, but, if possible, it should connect directly to the workroom. The workroom is a hub around which support staff offices are organized.

In a large church with five or more office support staff, obviously support staff will need to office next to the equipping staff members they support.

6. Senior pastor

Most senior pastors we have worked with like to have a small conference area in their offices where they can meet with 3 or 4 other people around a table. When this is practical, we try to honor this. Also, pastors who do a substantial amount of counseling often like to have an outdoor exit from their office so that a distraught counselee can leave privately without having to “walk the gauntlet” through the reception room. Also, some senior pastors who are plagued with many interruptions like to have a private exit just so they can leave the office without having to stop to visit with everyone they meet on their way out of the building as they go through the office complex, waiting area, etc. Obviously, this is more of a large church issue than a small church issue.

Give attention to soundproofing for any offices where counseling will be done. Also, give attention to glass windows in the doors and to having secretaries stationed outside those doors for the protection of the reputation of the pastors who are doing counseling with members of the opposite sex. If such an arrangement is not possible for each staff member who does counseling, it may be necessary to designate a counseling room to which these pastors come to counsel where these conditions can be met.

7. Equipping staff

The minimum size office for someone who works more than half-time is about 150 square feet. If possible, I try to place all equipping staff in offices with outside windows. Of course, this is ideal for support staff as well. Spaces that do not have windows can be used as workrooms, storage areas, and rest rooms.

I strongly prefer to have all the equipping staff together. Research has revealed that physical proximity is the single greatest predictor of close relationships. So, if a church wishes to develop strong teamwork among their staff, it is important that their staff all work in the same area.

There are usually some staff members who resist this. Often the youth pastor likes to have an office next to the youth activity area. Of course, this is convenient, especially if there are weekday youth activities—the youth pastor can monitor the activities from his/her office, and be available to the youth. Also, the youth pastor’s office becomes a youth hangout on youth meeting night. These are good things, but in my mind they do not supercede the value of promoting staff teamwork.

Sometimes it is possible to locate the youth pastor’s office so that it is part of the administrative complex and also adjacent to the youth activity area. That is ideal. If you must choose, you ask the senior pastor what he/she wants; you do not defer to the youth pastor.

A solution I think should be seriously considered (but I don’t think I’ve seen it done), is to have the youth pastor’s administrative office be in the staff team area, but to have a secondary office for hanging out with kids in the youth activity area. I can imagine church boards objecting to the waste of space in using two rooms for a youth pastor’s office. To address this, the “secondary” office could also double as one of the activity rooms in the youth ministry area (e.g., a breakout room).

Worship pastors also often give priority to being next to the worship space over being with the rest of the team. There are legitimate reasons for a worship pastor having an office next to the stage area. For churches that have choirs, often the worship pastor (assuming he leads the choir) will have an office in the corner of the choir room. This can be an excellent arrangement. Since I like for choir rooms to be multi-use (Sunday school, etc.), you may want to design the choir room so that one end of it (the end with the office area, and possibly a work area where music is spread out) can be divided off with a folding wall when other groups use the space.

Again, sometimes it is possible to place the worship pastor’s office so that it is part of the staff area and also next to the stage area. If not, like with the youth pastor, I would suggest an

administrative office as part of the team area and a music workroom (which can double as a choir room) next to the stage area. Obviously, a choir or practice room has special needs for soundproofing and acoustical treatment.

8. Common areas

Most church offices are designed with little thought to team-building. Since teamwork is so critical, I believe it is extremely important to design offices so that the facility itself promotes spontaneous community-building and teamwork. The space should be designed to encourage staff members to run into each other regularly and to spend time in conversation. Many of the best ministry ideas will be born in the break room over a spontaneous cup of coffee.

There are two primary common areas that should be part of a church office design. In the small church, these two can be combined in a single room.

- a. Break/snack room. This is a room equipped with a refrigerator, a coffee pot, a microwave, drinks and snacks. There must be a comfortable table(s) where 4 to 8 people can sit and visit. This can also serve as a lunch room and as a meeting room or an overflow workroom.
- b. Conference room. When possible, the office area should include a conference room that can be used for all-staff meetings, board meetings, etc. Ideally, this should be located so that it can conveniently be used as a classroom on Sunday morning (without having to walk through offices to get to it). In a small church, the workroom can be designed to double as a conference room. Even in the larger church, this conference room can be used as a secondary workroom (for example, for preparing mailings). Optional: If you wish to incorporate a small serving kitchen in this room, it becomes much more useful for refreshments and luncheons. Take care to not design this conference room so that it is a necessary hallway. (Many churches have meeting rooms or fellowship halls that serve as the only connector between other parts of the building, making it impossible to have a private meeting in the room.)

9. Growing room

Since, in our facility plans, we show a church how to accommodate growth to double the present size, that means that we have to anticipate where staff offices will be added as growth occurs. If doing new construction, be sure to provide space for future offices that can be used as meeting or conference space until it is needed as office space. (At which time additional meeting space will be added.)

10. Facility manager

For the church that has a facility manager, I do not consider it critical for his/her office to be with the other offices, though if that works well, that is a plus. More often, though, the facility manager prefers to have an office located at a strategic spot for caring for the building.

11. Counselors

When churches have counselors on staff, they often prefer to have a separate waiting area, and sometimes even a separate entrance, for the counselees, since counselees may be distressed both when arriving and leaving. Counseling offices do not have to be in the same area as other

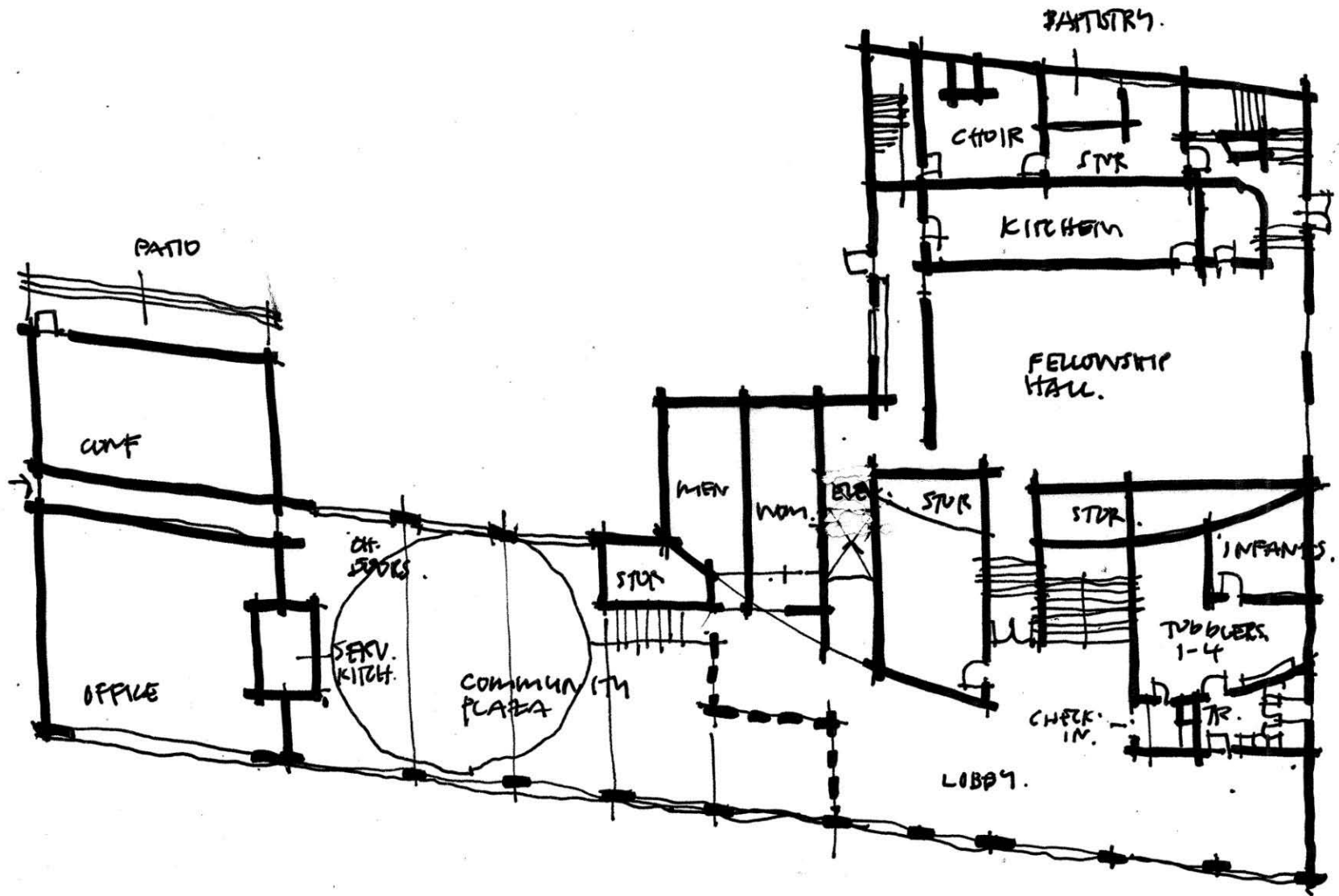
offices, especially if the church is providing space for counselors who are not employees of the church.

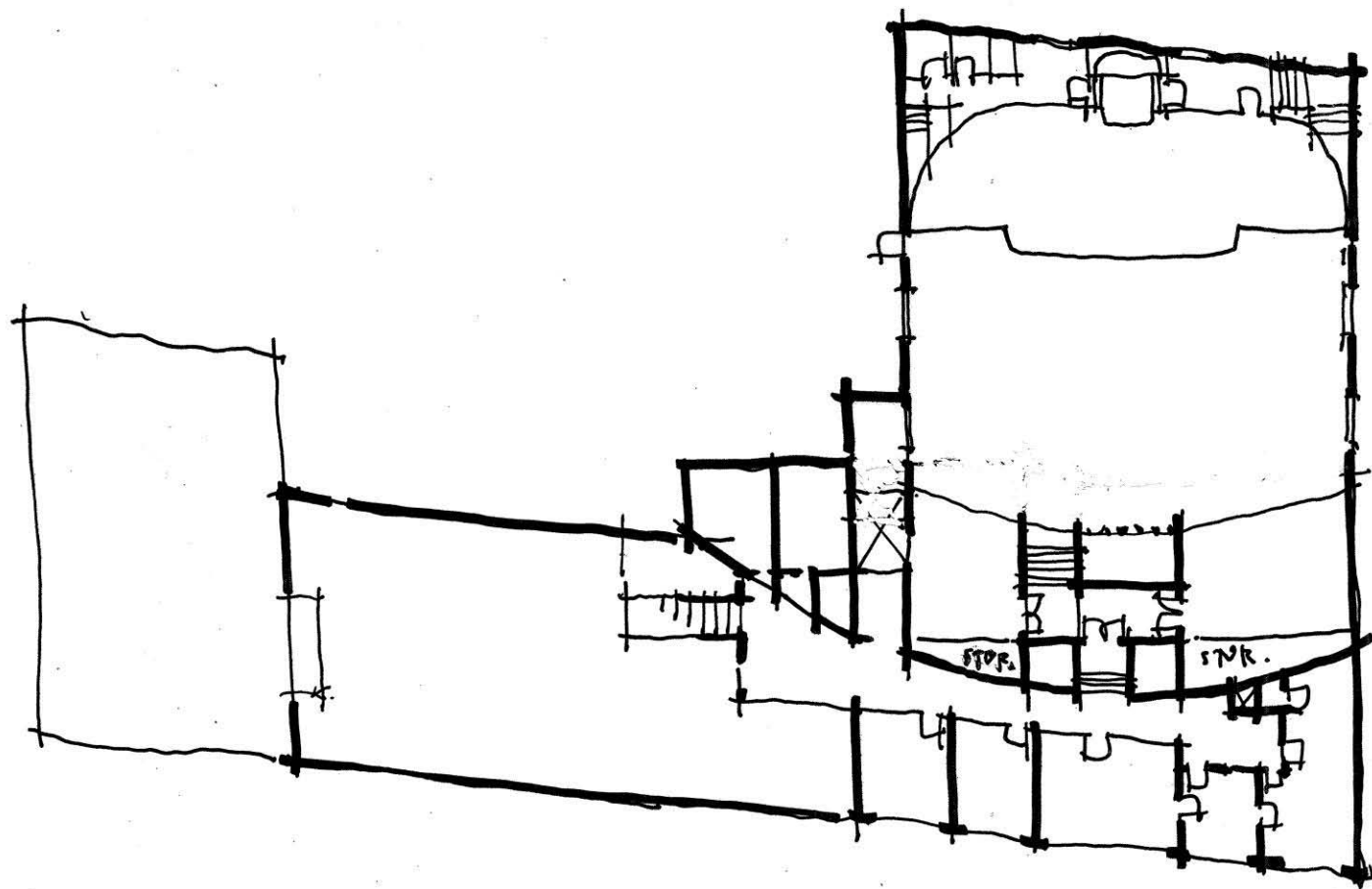
12 . Children's ministry workroom

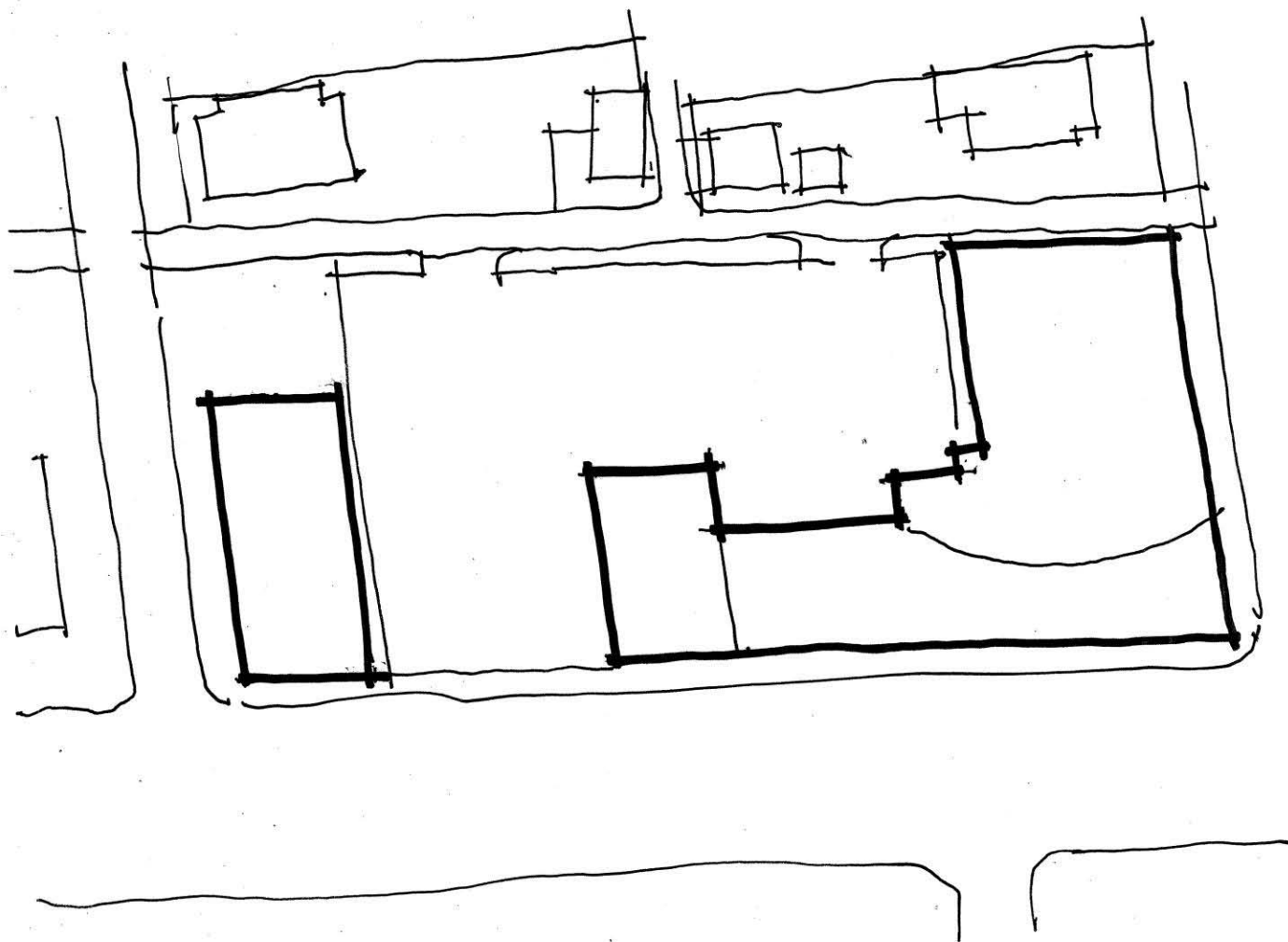
We recommend that the church have a workroom for children's workers that is located in the same area as the children's classrooms. This workroom should have a copier, supply cabinets, counter top workspace, paper cutter, etc. This space can be a part of or adjacent to the office of the children's ministry director, but in most cases it is not. Again, we want to see the children's ministry director officed with the rest of the staff. This area can serve as his or her workroom to supplement his/her office area. This is a good use for a windowless room.

13. Storage

Be sure to include adequate storage in the office design. A generous amount of storage in the workroom is at the heart of this. Of course, a children's ministry workroom should have plenty of storage for children's ministry supplies. Be sure to provide adequate storage for music and (if applicable) choir robes in the music practice room. Storage of musical instruments and staging is best accommodated directly adjacent to the stage area. Discourage the use of prime office space for archive storage. Attics and garages make great archive storage.









FINANCES

Your giving level

Among families giving \$500 or more a year to the church, the average giving is 6.5% of income. This is a healthy level of giving, though not optimal. (Optimal would be about 8%.) This level of giving can usually sustain modest growth of about 5% a year. What this means is that the lack of growth in attendance over these past few years is not due to weak giving, but to other barriers to growth. (Parking capacity is the most obvious one.)

To address the staffing needs we have identified and to do the remodeling needed in Phases 1 and 2, additional giving will be required over and above your present giving level.

Your budget priorities

To remove financial barriers to growth, you need to decrease spending in one area of your budget and increase it in two other areas.

The area that needs to be decreased is spending on debt. Right now, ten percent of all your spending is going into debt payments, and a good portion of that is going to interest. We recommend the following three-part strategy for paying off your entire debt by the summer of 2006.

1. Sell the annex property and apply the proceeds to the debt. You estimated that you might be able to get about \$125,000 from the sale of this property. After applying that to your \$205,000 debt, that will leave you with a debt of about \$80,000.
2. Apply the balance of your building fund to debt retirement. That should be about another \$30,000, leaving a balance of about \$50,000.
3. Start a "growth fund" to which people can donate specifically to remove barriers to future growth. Seek to raise \$200,000 for this fund over the next two years. This amount should be about what is needed to pay off the remaining \$50,000 of debt and complete Phases 1 and 2 of your facility plan. (You will want to set the goal for your capital campaign after you get specific estimates for the cost of the remodeling.)

If you can be debt-free by next summer, we suggest you then shift the 10% of your budget now being used for debt service to the staffing portion of your budget, and use these funds to hire a part-time Director of Ministry Development.

The other area where we recommend you increase spending is in the area of equipping non-staff members for ministry. We suggest you designate at least 2% of your total operating budget for training. This can be used for such purposes as:

- ☐ Taking a group of leaders to the multi-site conference in October in Chicago.
- ☐ Taking small group leaders to a small group training conference or bringing in an outside resource person to train small group leaders.
- ☐ After your new Director of Worship Arts is on board, send your worship teams to a worship conference.

Our observation is that often the most powerful training experiences are those that involve taking a ministry team, not just an individual or two, to a training event sponsored by a teaching church that is actually modeling what you are wanting to learn. Another valuable training experience can be continuing outside coaching for key leaders. Ideally, you will want to invest more than 2% of your budget in such training—perhaps twice that much—but 2% is a good step in

the right direction. (Right now you are spending about 0.1% on training non-staff ministry leaders.)

By eliminating spending on debt, and prioritizing staffing and training, you will be funding the areas that have the greatest strategic impact on church health and growth.

Raising capital funds

There are three basic ways you can approach raising capital funds:

1. Do it yourself.
2. Hire fund raisers.
3. Use a fund raising coach.

For smaller amounts, it is often possible to do the fund raising yourself. For larger amounts, the expertise of someone trained and experienced in fund raising is called for. Without the assistance of an experienced fund raiser, you run a serious risk of not reaching your fund raising goal, which puts at risk your basic purpose of removing barriers to healthy growth.

The advantage of hiring a fund raising group, as you have done in the past, is that you are almost certain to achieve your fund raising goal. The downside of this is that outside fund raisers are expensive, typically costing the church tens of thousands of dollars.

The sum you need to raise--about \$200,000--is an amount you may be able to raise this amount by yourselves. If you are not confident you can do it yourselves, you may wish to consider contracting with a fund raising coach who can train a group of your leaders in how to conduct your own capital funds campaign or organize an internal team and do the campaign yourself. You probably do not need to hire outside fund raisers for this amount.

Long-term financial goals

We recommend that you now set a goal of becoming and remaining free of long-term debt. Recently Living Stones did an analysis of the finances of the churches we consulted with between 1998 and 2004. Among healthy growing churches, we found that the average growth rate among debt-free churches was 11.5% a year. The average growth rate of churches with debt was 6.5% a year. Ideally, we recommend that churches make it a goal to keep the facility portion of their budgets at 20% or below. Generally, this is only possible if a church is debt-free and is also creative in making optimal use of their facilities.

Why is this important? Our research reveals that it is because staffing is the portion of a church's budget that has the strongest correlation to growth. In other words, debt, or excessive spending on facilities for any other reason, cripples a church's capacity to staff for growth. On the other hand, being debt-free and making creative use of facilities so that facility spending is minimized frees the church to make staffing its top budget priority, and that in turn enables the church to sustain growth.

Here are our findings on the relationship between investment in staffing and growth rate:

% of household income invested in staffing	average annual growth rate	number of churches
3% or more	14.1%	13
2% to 3%	7.7%	25
Less than 2%	.05%	9

No more building funds

We recommend that Hillcrest Baptist never again have a building fund. You will, of course, need to save for future buildings. We encourage you to always build for cash or almost cash. But we suggest you replace your building fund with a growth fund. The difference is that your growth fund can be used to remove barriers to growth, in whatever form.

For example, let's say that you have saved \$250,000 in your growth fund. This is a fourth of what you need to build your community plaza. But, let's also imagine that Hillcrest is growing so fast that to continue growing, you have to open up another worship site. To open up that site, you need to buy the electronic equipment needed to operate a video venue. You would not want to be in a situation where you had to postpone for a year opening up another worship site to remove barriers to growth because the money in your "building fund" was designated for a future community plaza. By calling this a "growth fund," you are free to use the funds to remove any barriers for growth you run into. This leaves you free to say yes to unforeseen opportunities to accommodate growth in ways we cannot even imagine right now.

Not only would it be a shame to have funds locked up for a future purpose when they are needed to remove an immediate barrier, but experience has demonstrated that having designated funds on hand actually discourages giving for present needs. Even if the funds are designated for another purpose, some people will inevitably have the perception, "The church really doesn't need my money for this; they have a lot of money in the bank."

Keep the focus on ministry

As you present these needs to your congregation, remember two things: Leaders must lead first of all by example, and that is just as true in the area of giving as in anywhere else. The increased giving that will be necessary to accomplish the vision outlined in these recommendations must begin with the leaders. If you as leaders are not passionate enough about this that you want to dig deep to do whatever you can to make this vision a reality, it is foolish to think that anyone else will be inspired to give sacrificially. Giving begins with the leaders.

Second, sometimes churches make the mistake of focusing on the new building during a capital campaign. It is possible to overstate the case of the importance of the building, and people end up with the idea that building the building is the work of the church.

Take care through all this process to keep your focus on ministering to the neighborhood. The building is only a tool, and not even the most important one. (Staffing and training are even more important factors than the building.) If for some reason you found it impossible to remodel the building for ten years, you could still reach out to the neighborhood, build relationships, and grow to several times your present size. A building will make that easier and more likely, but the building isn't the most important thing.

So, keep your focus on neighborhood ministry. The building is just a tool. Never lose sight of that.

Financial health

We believe the basic financial health of Hillcrest Baptist is good. The changes in budget priorities are within reach for you, and can probably be accomplished within a year. Our sense is that there is a generous spirit within the church, and that you can probably accomplish Phase 1 and 2 remodeling within two years on a pay-as-you-go basis. It's possible you can do it faster. But, if it takes three years rather than two, that's not a big problem, only a minor inconvenience. Go ahead with it as the Lord provides, but don't sweat it.

In the long run, you will want to increase your average giving level to about the 8% level (based on households giving \$500 a year or more). With the capital campaign, you will

temporarily raise it above that level. To maintain vigorous growth after that campaign, it will be important for most people to not return to their present level of giving, but to continue at a level of giving that is higher than their present level of giving by about 2%. So, for example, if someone is now giving 12% of income to the church, after the capital campaign, long-term giving would continue at a 14% level. Someone who is now at 4% would go to 6%, and so on.

This is a realistic but significant increase in giving level, and can make the difference between modest growth (about 5% a year) and vigorous growth (over 10% a year). We see Hillcrest as being a church that has the potential for sustained vigorous growth, and would encourage you to make that your goal.

FINANCIAL RECOMMENDATIONS CHECKLIST

- ☐ Get out of debt in the next 12 months by:
 - Selling the annex property and applying the proceeds to your debt
 - Applying the remaining balance from your building fund to the debt
 - Applying the first \$50,000 raised by your capital campaign to your debt
- ☐ Conduct a capital campaign (perhaps with the assistance of a fund raising coach) to raise approximately \$200,000 by the summer of 2007 to complete your debt liquidation and to pay for Phases 1 and 2 of your facility plan.
- ☐ When your debt is retired, reallocate that 10% of your budget to staffing, and use those funds to hire a part-time Director of Ministry Development.
- ☐ Budget 2% of your total budget for equipping non-staff members for ministry. As you are able, increase this percentage in future years with the goal of investing 4% to 5% in equipping for ministry.
- ☐ Establish a growth fund to be used not only for future building needs, such as Phase 3 of your facility plan, but to remove any barriers to growth that may arise, particularly those that may now be unforeseen. Commit to meeting future facility needs on a cash or almost cash basis so that mortgage payment will never again cripple your ability to staff for growth.
- ☐ Following your two-year capital campaign, sustain your giving at a level of about 8% of family income (compared to the present level of 6.5%) so that you will have the funds you need to sustain vigorous growth.



CONCLUSION

Next steps in the process

Your consulting contract with Living Stones includes unlimited email and phone coaching through December 28, 2005. Your staff, your Church Health Team, and your Facility Task Force are all free to call Eddy or Greg at any time during office hours (or after hours, if previously arranged) or to email us. Living Stones is on your payroll! Don't hesitate to call on us.

You have the option of extending the coaching contract to twelve months if you feel it would be helpful. Your consulting package includes a second NCD survey. We recommend that you take this about a year after the first one, which would be in July of 2005, although you can take it any time before August 28, 2007. (If you don't take it by then, your license expires.) If you opt for extended coaching, following that survey, a member of your Living Stones team would probably return to Columbus to spend a weekend with your leaders. This would include a Saturday session with your leaders to interpret your new NCD scores, do some equipping focused on your new Minimum Factor, and to meet with your Church Health Team to help them refocus their work for the coming year in light of your new Minimum Factor. It is also an option for an extended coaching contract to include a site visit for training purposes in the area of your Minimum Factor or any other area where you feel the need during the year of coaching.

The coaching relationship can be renewed on a year-to-year basis, with the package of services each year being customized to your needs.

Thank you!

Of the more than 60 churches we have consulted with, I cannot recall any church that was a greater delight to work with than Hillcrest. Most of the churches we consult with are not ones we would be willing to recommend to someone in that town who was looking for a home church. (Consultants are notorious for being hard to please when it comes to finding a home church.) Not only would I gladly recommend, Hillcrest, but if I lived in Columbus, I would consider making Hillcrest my church home. (And from a hard-to-satisfy consultant, that's high praise.)

We are excited about what God has done, is doing, and will be doing through Hillcrest. We believe the story is only going to get better.

It has been a joy to work with you and we are excited for the opportunity you have given us to work with you over the next few months and to see what God is going to do through you in the years to come. Thanks so much for inviting us!