

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

AN EVALUATION OF THE GROWING HEALTHY CHURCHES PROGRAM AS A
METHOD FOR PRODUCING HEALTHY, GROWING, AND REPRODUCING
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONGREGATIONS

A Thesis Project Submitted to
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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I dedicate this project to my mother and grandmother, who are both in heaven. My mother taught me to be a lifelong learner; my grandmother taught me how to love God.

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ABSTRACT

AN EVALUATION OF THE GROWING HEALTHY CHURCHES PROGRAM AS A METHOD FOR PRODUCING HEALTHY, GROWING, AND REPRODUCING SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONGREGATIONS

Donald Lynn Hardaway

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012

Mentor: Dr. Charlie N. Davidson

The current status of Southern Baptist churches in the United States necessitates the development of a strategy for renewal toward health and multiplication. The purpose of this project is to suggest a proven model for local church revitalization through the “Growing Healthy Churches” program developed by Dr. Paul Borden. Based on responses from churches participating in the Growing Healthy Churches program and pastors who have led their churches through the strategies presented by Borden, the project explains the revitalization process, reviews the results, and makes a recommended plan of action for local church renewal through association-led programming.

Abstract length: 97 words

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Paul Borden, Director of Growing Healthy Churches,¹ has developed a successful method of church and associational transformation that has proven effective in producing healthy, growing, reproducing congregations. He has led the American Baptist Churches of the West from a plateaued and declining condition to one of health and growth by emphasizing biblical strategies, courageous leadership, and hard work. In 1997, the American Baptist Churches of the West,² one of 34 regions in the American Baptist Churches USA, had 229 congregations located in Northern California and Northwest Nevada. Of those churches, 192 were plateaued or dying, while only 37 congregations, or 16%, were growing. The average worship attendance was 100, the morale was low, and the prospect for future growth was non-existent. With over 200 churches, baptisms averaged less than 800 per year.³

Only five years later in 2002, there were 215 congregations and 72% of those congregations were experiencing growth under Borden's direction.⁴ The average attendance in congregations was 188 and over 11,000 more people attended worship in

¹ Formerly known as *The American Baptist Churches of the West*.

² The western regional network of churches associated with American Baptist Churches (USA).

³ Paul Borden, *Direct Hit: Aiming Real Leaders at the Mission Field* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 18.

⁴ Paul Borden, *Hit the Bullseye: How Denominations Can Aim the Congregation at the Mission Field* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 26.

these congregations than in 1997.⁵ There were over 6,000 baptisms from 1999 through 2001.⁶ The region had 18 churches that averaged over 500 in worship.⁷ Between 2002 and 2009, over 80 new congregations were planted in twelve states and three foreign countries, many of which started with 200-500 in worship.⁸ Baptisms increased from 800 baptisms a year to 4,000 baptisms each year.⁹

Dr. Borden's success has not gone unnoticed; local and state associations from several denominations have invited him and his team to teach them how to implement their growth principles in their own organizations. Southern Baptists, American Baptists, Conservative Baptists, Fundamental Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Pentecostals and Charismatics, and the Salvation Army have implemented the Growing Healthy Churches process with an overall 50% success rate.¹⁰

Statement of the Problem

According to Borden, less than 20% (17.7%) of the population of the United States attends church regularly and among that 20%, 9.25% attend Evangelical churches, 5.5% attend Roman Catholic churches, while 3.1% attend mainline denominational

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Paul Borden, *Leading Today's Church into Tomorrow*, PowerPoint Presentation, Norfolk Area Baptist Association, 2009.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

churches.¹¹ The average congregational worship attendance in the United States is 124 people.¹² Three thousand congregations die each year while 3,800 congregations are started annually. According to Borden's research, it would take 10,000 new congregations each year just to keep up with the population growth.¹³

The Southern Baptist Convention faces a future of diminishing influence unless a method can be found to rebuild the health of its churches. After experiencing a growing membership count for decades, the Convention has registered only marginal growth since 2000. In 2007, they saw their membership decline, with baptisms down 12% from 2002 and 22% from 1972.¹⁴ Baptisms were down by 5% again in 2010. Baptisms among Southern Baptist churches fell to their lowest number in sixty years and the 2010 number indicates declining numbers for eight out of the past ten years.¹⁵ Total membership in 2010 declined 0.15% from the 2009 level. Primary worship attendance in SBC churches also declined in 2010, by 0.19%.¹⁶

Thom Rainer, President of LifeWay Christian Resources, points out that, in the 1950s, there was one baptism for every twenty Southern Baptists. Now there are forty

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Peter Smith, "Southern Baptists Fret Over Decline as Annual Meeting Begins," *USA Today*, June 10, 2008, http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2008-06-10-southern-baptists_N.htm (Accessed March 19, 2012)

¹⁵ Bob Smietana, "Nation's Largest Protestant Group Faces 'Decline'," *USA Today*, June 11, 2011, http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2011-06-12-baptisms_11_ST_N.htm (Accessed March 19, 2012)

¹⁶ Russ Rankin, "Southern Baptists Fret Over Decline as Annual Meeting Begins," <http://www.lifeway.com/ArticleView?storeId=10054&catalogId=10001&langId=-1&article=Southern-baptists-decline-in-baptisms-membership-attendance> (Accessed March 19, 2012)

Southern Baptist members for each baptism.¹⁷ While some churches in the Convention are healthy, vibrant, and growing, others suffer from a lack of vision, leadership, and direction. These churches have distanced themselves from fulfilling the Great Commission and need to be reclaimed for the kingdom of God and His glory.

Statement of Importance and Purpose

The probability of each local congregation facilitating the changes necessary to revitalize their commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission, and growing as a result, is minimal. The responsibility of leading multiple congregations through a healthy growth process rests on the local association and its leaders. It is imperative that each association discover a proven method of church revitalization and implement that method in its member churches. The purpose of this project is to examine Dr. Borden's Growing Healthy Churches method of church consultation and pastoral leadership training, to measure its effectiveness in Southern Baptist Churches that have participated in at least one of the three segments of the process and to recommend its implementation, with noted adjustments, to both pastors and associational leaders.

The focus of this study is the Southern Baptist Convention and the solutions offered will be governed by the current structure of that Convention, which involves churches being served by local associations; other denominations should be able to apply most of the principles set forth in this project, but the language and methods will be familiar to those who are associated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

¹⁷ Smietana, *Decline*.

Special Terminology

The following describes the special terminology that will be used throughout this project:

Growing Healthy Churches (GHC) refers to the method employed by Borden and his team in leading churches toward transformation and is the name of the association of American Baptist Churches under Borden's leadership.¹⁸

The Associational director, also known as the director of missions, or associational missionary, is the term used to refer to the recognized and elected servant-leader of the loosely connected congregations in a specific area. His role is vital in enlisting congregations to send their pastors to the monthly pastors' cluster, encouraging each church to participate in the consultation process, assisting in writing the prescriptions resulting from the consultation, and providing needed support to the congregation once the prescriptions have been adopted.

The pastors' cluster is the term used to refer to a group consisting of five to seven pastors who covenant together to meet monthly with the cluster mentor and associational director to learn effective leadership principles, hold one another accountable for growth statistics, encourage one another and pray for one another.

The mentor pastor is the term used to refer to a pastor who must lead a congregation that is larger than any of the churches represented among the pastors in the

¹⁸ Borden, *Direct Hit*, 29.

cluster. He leads the devotional and inspirational time during the monthly cluster meetings and guides the accountability process during the prayer time with the pastors.

The weekend consultation is the term describing the process of interviews followed by prescriptions writing; it is led by Borden, one of his team members, or a trained GHC professional. The consultation team assists the consultant and consists of associational personnel and local growth-oriented pastors. After reading the congregational self-study prior to the consultation and interviewing the leaders and members of the congregation, the consultant identifies and lists the weaknesses and strengths of the church, with five prescriptions designed to “kick start” the congregation and get them back on the path of obedience to the Great Commission.

The congregational coach is the term used to refer to a local pastor who has experience leading congregations to growth who will assist each congregation to implement the prescriptions provided by the consultation team.

Statement of Limitations

Only Southern Baptist churches that have participated in at least one of the three segments of the process will be surveyed. Borden’s process has been successfully implemented across denominational lines, but the focus of this project is Southern Baptist churches; other denominational results will not be included in this study. The effectiveness survey was conducted among Southern Baptist churches in two geographical areas: Tidewater, Virginia and the Northwestern states. Because of the confidential and sensitive nature of the relationship between directors of missions and their supporting pastors, it was agreed that only one enlistment email would be sent by

the author to the pastors. Ninety-three pastors were emailed; twenty-five responded to the survey.

The focus will be on revitalizing existing churches, not church plants. Alternative methods of church revitalization will not be considered here; the focus is on the GHC method alone.

Biblical and Theoretical Basis

The foundation of GHC growth strategy is found in three biblical truths: the mission of the church, the image of Jesus Christ and the sense of urgency surrounding the Great Commission.¹⁹

The God of the Bible is a missionary God; therefore, the church has one mission: "to be God's missionary entity in this world to call women and men to repentance through faith in Jesus Christ."²⁰ God has sought to bring people back to himself since the fall of the human race in the Garden of Eden. He blessed Abraham and his descendants so that the world would be blessed through them. God's expectation of Israel to be a light to the Gentiles was not met and the nation failed in its mission. Isaiah laments this loss of influence by Israel in Isaiah 49:6: "Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to

¹⁹ Borden, *Hit the Bullseye*, 16-26.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.

the ends of the earth.’’ Paul refers to Israel’s refusal to obey God’s purpose in Romans 10:18-21:

But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: “Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world.” But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: “I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.” But Isaiah is very bold and says: “I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.” But to Israel he says: “All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.”²¹

Israel's disobedience was replaced by the Lord Jesus Christ's command, and primary mission, to the first congregation of disciples:

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”²²

GHC believes that God created the church primarily as a missional entity. The primary responsibility of each local congregation is to be involved in carrying out this mission. The goal of each association, then, is to assist congregations in becoming missional entities. One of the great challenges is helping congregations understand that they were not created to take care of their needs first. Health and growth is a result of understanding that the church exists for others; this forces Christians to focus outward and invites the supernatural assistance of the Spirit of God. ²³

A defining image of the Lord Jesus Christ that defines His relationship to the local congregation can be seen in Revelation 1:12-16:

²¹ *Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), Romans 10:18-21

²² Matthew 28:18-20

²³ Borden, *Hit the Bullseye*, 136-137.

Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.²⁴

As the resurrected and glorified Lord, he stands before the apostle John as the Judge and Leader of his church. He judges congregations that failed to carry out his mission. He leads his church from a position of power and glory. This image must replace that of a suffering Savior and a kindly Friend in the minds of pastors and congregations if they are to move from being unhealthy to healthy. While these two ideas of Christ are biblical, and each conveys its own significance, neither image creates within congregations “a sense of effectiveness in ministry, hope of changed communities, or an abundance of new disciples willing to follow a Savior who has provided for their redemption.”²⁵ The church that sees Him as resurrected, ascended, and glorified must also envision Him as the One Who holds each congregation accountable for the completion of their mission.

If a congregation does not understand that one’s relationship to Jesus Christ determines his or her eternal destiny, there is no sense of urgency about communicating the Gospel message. When a church focuses on its own needs rather than the needs of those who are without Christ, they are denying the basic reason for Christ’s coming into this world. He gave the Great Commission to his church because there is a sense of

²⁴ *NKJV*, Revelation 1:12-16.

²⁵ Borden, *Hit the Bullseye.*, 137.

urgency in its completion. Congregations that focus on worship, fellowship, and teaching lose their sense of urgency and can easily become disobedient to the command given by Christ. They fight over worship wars rather than struggling over new ways to reach those who are lost. They go to conferences and learn about Scripture but rarely use their baptisteries. The mission of the church is to make more disciples for Jesus Christ. He gave that mission to the church because he understood the urgency of reaching people before they die.²⁶

The mission of the church has been clearly identified and communicated by the Lord Jesus Christ; failure to obey His instructions, regardless of the excuses offered by a local congregation, may result in a reprimand from the resurrected Lord and Leader of the church. Losing the sense of urgency involved in moving people from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light will result in a complacent congregation, inviting the disfavor of God Who reigns over all.

Major Assumptions

One of the assumptions made by the author is that the local church is designed to grow in a healthy manner and to reproduce itself. Healthy organisms grow and reproduce. While living things are limited to one lifespan, after which death occurs, congregations may spawn into multiple growth cycles if a new vision is embraced by the church.

²⁶ Ibid., 138-139.

A second major assumption made by the author is that the congregations in an association desire to be obedient to Christ. Undoubtedly, there are exceptions to this assumption; congregations that are determined to be rebellious and disobedient to Christ's command to evangelize cannot be revitalized.

A third major assumption held by the author is that plateaued and/or dying congregations have given up real hope that any changes they might make will redirect them toward a state of health and reproduction. It is assumed their problem is not disobedience but ignorance of the methodologies of church revitalization.

Statement of Methodology

This project will both explain and critique Borden's GHC process as it applies to the local church and the local association of churches. Based on all researched and compiled information, beyond this first chapter, this thesis project will be divided into the following chapters:

Chapter II: Research and Findings

Observations from the author's experience as a cluster mentor, consultation team member and congregational coach will be combined with the results of a survey from among Southern Baptist pastors who have participated in at least one of the three basic components of the GHC process to assess the success of the process and recommend improvements designed specifically for Southern Baptist associations and congregations.

Chapter III: Seven Core Values of Growing Healthy Churches

The seven core values of GHC principles, considered necessary to transition a church from a place of non-growth to a place of growth, will be detailed in this chapter.

Chapter IV: The Monthly Pastors' Cluster

Strategies for recruiting pastors for the cluster will be given, as well as determining which pastors to recruit to raise the possibility of success. Choosing the cluster mentor, the pastor responsible for training the pastors in leadership and congregational health, will be discussed in this chapter. The format of the cluster meeting, including subject matter and time structure, will be included.

Chapter V: The Weekend Consultation

Preparation for the weekend by the congregation and the consultation team, as well as how to conduct the interviews, sample prescriptions, and the report to the congregation will be given in this chapter. Congregational Life Cycles and how they apply to the consultation process will be delineated. The second part of the consultation process is the follow-up by the association and the assignment and duties of the congregational coach; these will also be included in this chapter.

Chapter VI: Lay Training Events and Conclusion

Two lay training events are associated with the GHC process. The topics taught by the consultant, along with detailed descriptions of each event, will be included in this chapter. Concluding thoughts and recommendations will complete the project.

Review of Literature

Extra-biblical Review

A review of the literature related to the focus of this thesis includes books and materials authored by Dr. Borden and books on leading church revitalization. *Hit the*

Bullseye: How Denominations Can Aim the Congregation at the Mission Field, is the first book Dr. Borden's three-book series delineating the GHC concept and methodology. The book speaks of the history of the American Baptist Churches of the West (now Growing Healthy Churches) and is written to local associational leaders who have a desire to reproduce his association's results.

Another of the primary sources for this project is *Direct Hit: Aiming Real Leaders at the Mission Field*. Also written by Borden, this second book in his series is written to pastors who have a passion to lead their congregations to an outward focus. How to develop a vision and communicate a strategy for its implementation, motivate a congregation to embrace the vision, develop resources, ideas, and personnel to prepare for change are covered by the author.

The third book in Borden's series is *Assaulting the Gates: Aiming All God's People at the Mission Field*. The author believes that everyone in the congregation must be involved in the process of transformation and the local association must be included to provide resources, training, and accountability.

Hit the Bullseye Introduction and How to Be a Healthy Church is a DVD resource available through the NABA office in which Borden gives additional insight and helps to a congregation considering moving to the GHC format.

Developing Healthy Leaders and Congregations is a six-session DVD set in which Borden outlines the principles that led to the successful turnaround of two hundred churches in his region.

Leading Today's Church into Tomorrow is a PowerPoint presentation provided by Dr. Borden to attendees at his initial associational consult with the Norfolk Area Baptist Association in June 2009.

Winning on Purpose: How to Organize Congregations to Succeed in Their Mission is written by John Edmund Kaiser, and offers leaders a way to organize broken congregations by creating structures which enable church life and health. Kaiser sets forth the Accountable Leadership strategy which brings together standards for mission, boundaries, and accountability and illustrates how these come to life through the performance of four key players: the board, the pastor, the staff, and the congregation.

The Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development, written by George W. Bullard, Jr., explains the growth and death cycle of a church in ten phases.

Every Congregation Needs a Little Conflict, written by George W. Bullard, Jr., provides a valuable resource for the pastor who finds himself embroiled in the conflicts associated with change. Understanding the level of conflict and how each level is to be approached is dealt with in this book.

Comeback Churches: How 100 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too is written by Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson. This book provides insight to the turnaround process and supports many of the ideas promoted by GHC.

Reimagining Evangelism: Inviting Friends on a Spiritual Journey, by Rick Richardson, is the primary book prescribed to each congregation to facilitate a change from an inward focus to an outward focus.

The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship that Actually Changes Lives, by Peter Scazzero, deals with the emotional vulnerability experienced by

many church members and gives guidance in how to deal with the conflict that will inevitably arise during the process of transition.

Becoming a Healthy Church: 10 Traits of a Vital Ministry, written by Stephen A. Macchia, provides background material to support Borden's concepts of outward focus and accountability.

Cracking Your Church's Culture: Seven Keys to Unleashing Vision and Inspiration, written by Samuel R. Chand, supplements Borden's insights on communicating vision to the congregation.

Biblical Review

While it should be obvious that God desires His congregations to be spiritually and emotionally healthy by maintaining a focus on reaching those who are not yet disciples, it is important to find authority for the concepts in the Scriptures. Matthew 28:18-20 is foundational to the success of any congregation. While some churches have made "the great commandment"²⁷ their focus, it does not help them truly carry out the Great Commission. The church is to be going out, seeking to share the good news of the gospel with people who are unreached. Discipleship is important, but it is not the primary mission of the church; it is a byproduct of evangelism.

Revelation 1:12-16 describes the relationship Christ has with His churches today. He is "in the midst of the churches," evaluating them, measuring them by how well they

²⁷ Matthew 22:36-40. "Love God and love your neighbor as yourself" is not exclusionary of sharing the gospel with those who are lost. The greatest act of loving one's neighbor is bringing them to salvation.

are obeying Him. The letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 prove He is not pleased with much of what occurs in His churches and desires them to repent of their disobedience and return to the primary thrust of His mission.²⁸

Contrasting the modern Southern Baptist congregation to the churches in the book of Acts is not difficult; the differences are startling. The churches in Acts were known as houses of prayer with enough spiritual power to withstand any attempt by Satan to neutralize them. They were marked by astounding growth, favored by the growth-oriented grace of God. Today's typical Southern Baptist church is marked by tradition, commitment to an outdated system of governance, and is either plateaued or dying.

Jesus made clear He expects fruitfulness of His people, not merely faithfulness. Fruitfulness is measurable, it is noticeable, and it is countable. He even lists levels of fruitfulness, which encourage the church to measure its effectiveness at present with its effectiveness in the past.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.²⁹

He also portrays the Father as the gardener who examines the branches to determine their fruitfulness. Those branches that do not bear fruit lose their vital connection to the life of the vine, represented as Jesus in his illustration.

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes,

²⁸ Revelation 2:1-7

²⁹ *NKJV*, John 15:5-8.

that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.³⁰

Even if the illustration given by Jesus is restricted to apply only to the individual, it is inconceivable that a congregation filled with fruitful believers who are vitally and intimately connected to the Vine will not be healthy and growing.

Christ states his own mission in Luke 19:10, “for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Any church that has dislodged itself from his mission, no matter how noble or high-sounding their efforts may be, has disobeyed their Master’s command. They must repent as a congregation, confess their sin of disobedience to the Lord, and reengage the mission assigned to them by the One who purchased them with his own blood.³¹

Another foundational passage of Scripture that should inspire the local congregation toward an outward focus is Acts 1:8, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Jesus spells out the mission field in this statement by focusing the attention of the disciples away from themselves and outward, toward the city of Jerusalem and its environs, over the ethnic horizon to Samaria, and over the geographical horizon to the ends of the earth. It is notable that the early church in Jerusalem seemed to grow satisfied with merely reaching Jerusalem and caring for themselves; in response, God sent a persecution that forced them to refocus their attention beyond themselves. “At that time

³⁰ *NKJV*, John 15:1–4.

³¹ Acts 20:28 – “the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.”

a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”³²

Some justification for writing stopgap prescriptions that startle a dying congregation into change can be gained from God’s own strategy in forcing the church to do what he had instructed them to do in Acts 8. The writing of prescriptions and the planning process finds commonality with the Scriptural practice of writing down plans prior to advancing them. Before Moses had the tabernacle in the wilderness built, he wrote down the specific and detailed plans God had given him (Exodus 30-33). The people indicated their support of the plan through a freewill offering (Exodus 34-36). David wrote a plan for the temple which was followed by Solomon and subscribed to by the people of Israel through their generosity.³³³⁴

An important part of the process of revitalization involves the congregational consultant, his team, and the congregation seeking God’s favor in forming them into his desired shape. Jeremiah’s experience at the potter’s house exposes the need to let God form the congregation:

Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make. “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?” says the LORD. “Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!”³⁵

³² NKJV, Acts 8:1.

³³ Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church: Ten Traits of a Vital Ministry*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 171.

³⁴ 1 Chronicles 29

³⁵ Jeremiah 18:3,4, 6

Ultimately, the success of any congregation rests in its ability to be pliable in the hands of the Divine Potter. The consultation team can write prescriptions, the congregation can follow the process, but until the Lord actually takes the leadership of the congregation, any success will be temporary at best. As the Psalmist wrote, “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.”³⁶

Thesis Construction

The Growing Healthy Churches process, built around the pastors’ cluster, the weekend consultation and two lay training events, provides an effective, proven method of church revitalization when implemented by the leadership of the local Southern Baptist association of churches. Because of the unique characteristics of Southern Baptists, and the way they govern their congregations, the author will recommend several specific improvements to the GHC process to accommodate those unique qualities.

³⁶ Psalm 127:1

CHAPTER II

Research and Findings

The research phase of this project covers a two-year period of participation in the GHC process and observing how it was implemented in the Norfolk (Virginia) Area Baptist Association and a three-month survey period in which eighty-two pastors from the Northwest Baptist Convention, who had participated in at least one of the three elements of the process, were given the opportunity to take an online survey of ten questions designed to measure the effectiveness of the process in their churches.

The survey was conducted through an online survey tool produced, administered, and monitored by www.surveymonkey.com. The surveys were taken online by each of the 25 individuals in private settings. No time limit or outside influence was administered and no type of supervision was given. No enticements or rewards were given to anyone for completing the survey. The only instructions given were the address to the survey's web link, <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YD3SM97>, and the instructions on the online survey itself.

The survey was designed with ten questions listed in Appendix A. Each respondent was instructed to answer according to his level of participation in the cluster group, weekend consultation and lay training events.

The Norfolk phase of research involved serving as the cluster mentor for eleven pastors, divided into two clusters, participating in two weekend consultations with Dr. Borden, and serving as the congregational coach for two local congregations during the two year time frame.

General Factors

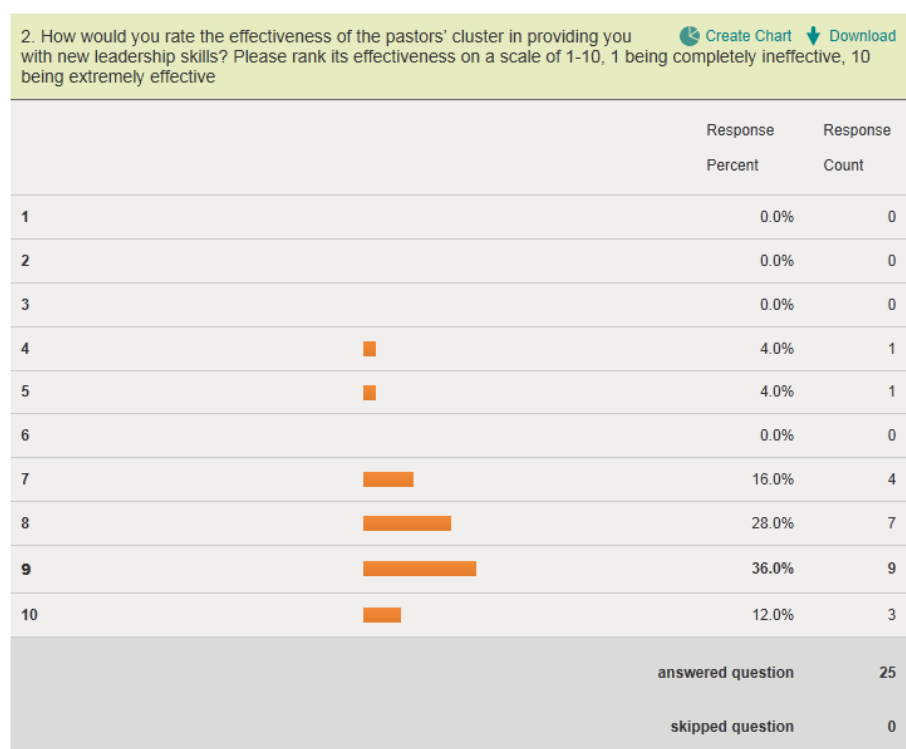
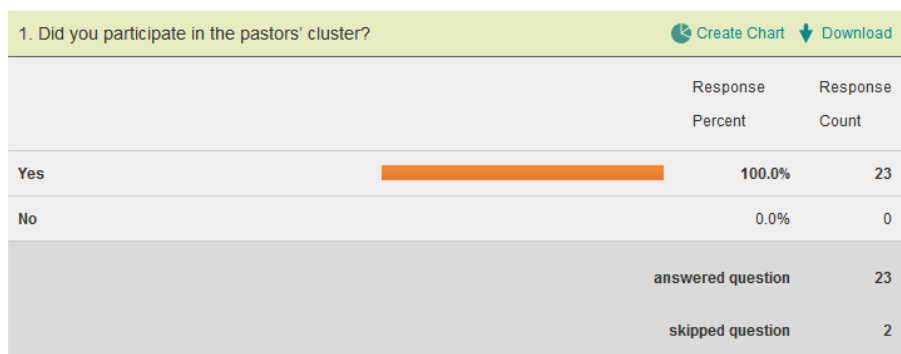
The first meeting of each cluster set the tone for the monthly meetings; a heightened sense of expectation among the pastors was evident. A clear resistance to being held accountable for actions and results was observed, but this resistance relaxed as the pastors realized the purpose of the accountability was not to condemn them, but to give them an additional motivating factor for practicing good leadership skills. Another observation made by the author was the almost immediate sense of camaraderie among the pastors present; this was instigated by the prayer time following lunch. The pointed questions asked of each pastor during the prayer time forced a deeper level of transparency among the group.

The survey supported another observation; reading a book on leadership each month and discussing it among the cluster was a highlight for most of the pastors. When asked, “What was the greatest benefit of the pastors’ cluster?” 92% of the respondents stated that the books read during the course of the year of pastors’ clusters were of great benefit to them. 84% agreed that the discussions between the pastors and the cluster mentor were beneficial to them as leaders. Lower percentiles were given the devotionals (12%) and prayer time (16%) in the benefit given to the cluster pastors.

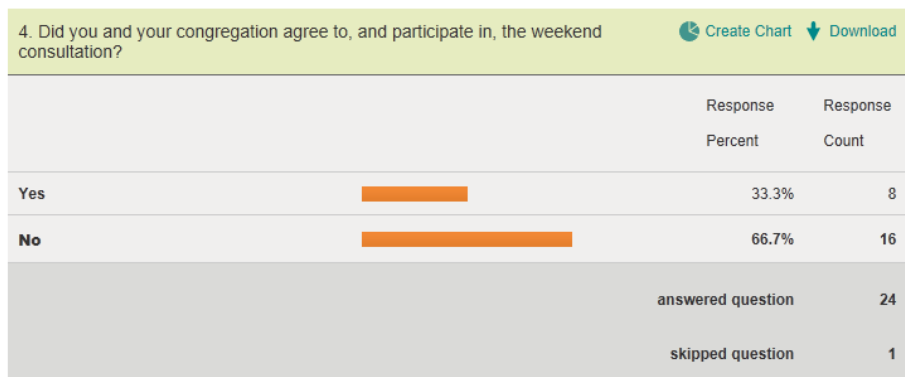


The discussions in the Norfolk clusters centered around applying the principles in the books to every day ministry, dealing with the fears associated with leading change in a resistant congregation, convincing congregational leaders to assist in the process and listening to the experiences of the pastors who had most recently completed the weekend consultation. It became the cluster mentor's role to abbreviate the verbal contributions of any one pastor who tended to monopolize the conversation, to keep every person engaged and involved in the discussion, and to guide the dialog toward the goal of covering the topic for the month.

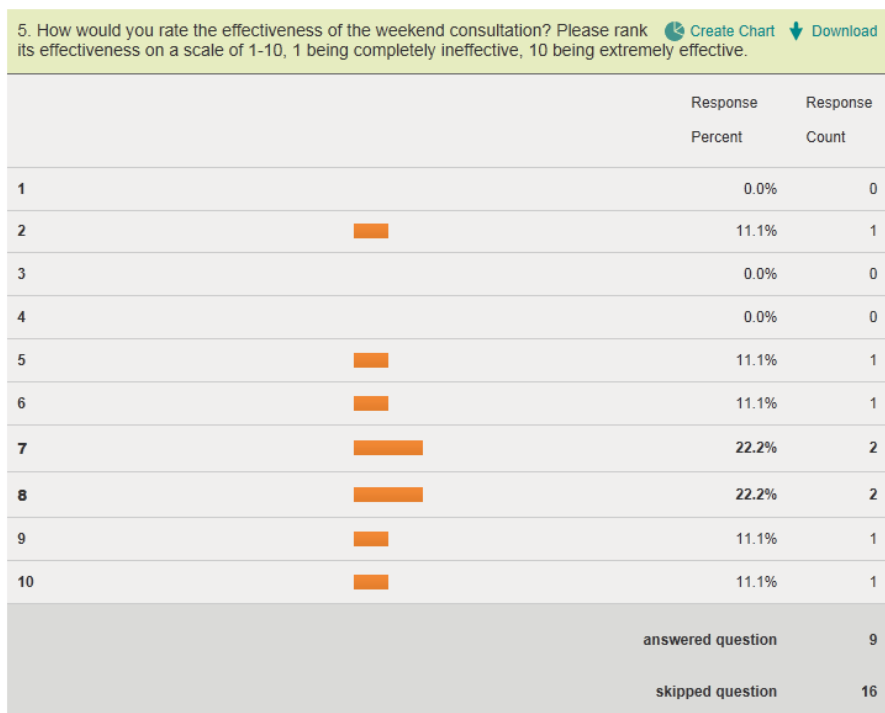
23 of the 25 respondents to the survey, or 92%, participated in the pastors' cluster and rated its significance in the 7-10 range, signifying the high value of the cluster in its impact in communicating new leadership skills to the participants.



33% of the respondents led their congregation to participate in the weekend consultation, while 67% did not. This percentage is low compared to the NABA churches. Eight out of the eleven churches in the Tidewater area agreed to the weekend consultation. The size of these churches ranged from small (less than 100 attenders) to medium (greater than 100 but less than 400 weekly attenders).



The effectiveness of the consultation depended on more than a single factor. If the congregation was in a state of desperation, they more quickly agreed to the five prescriptions written by the consultant. Churches which were financially strong were more resistant to the changes prescribed. Another limiting factor in the success of the consultation was the strength of the prescriptions written; if the prescriptions were overbearing and seemed to remove control from the congregation, they were voted down. If they were written in such a way as to leave the congregation with some control over their own destiny, they were voted up.



Nine men responded to the online survey question, eight of whom rated the weekend consultation at 5 or higher, with one rating it at 2.

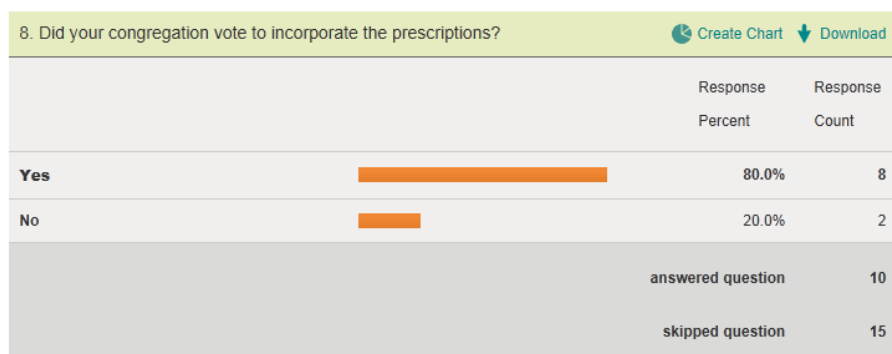
Six of the twelve pastors who responded when asked what they considered to be the most effective piece of the weekend consultation listed the leadership interviews conducted by the consultant as having the greatest benefit to the congregation. The Norfolk interviews consisted of a series of questions: How long have you attended this church? Why did you join this church? How far do you drive to attend this church? What do you like best about this church? If you could change one thing about this church, what would it be? The questions were given to the congregation prior to the interviews to give them time to consider their answers, which created conversations about change before the weekend consultation.

Three pastors listed the prescriptions given to the congregation by the consultant as being the greatest benefit, while one listed the consultant's explanation of the prescriptions and the resultant presentation to the congregation as having the greatest impact.

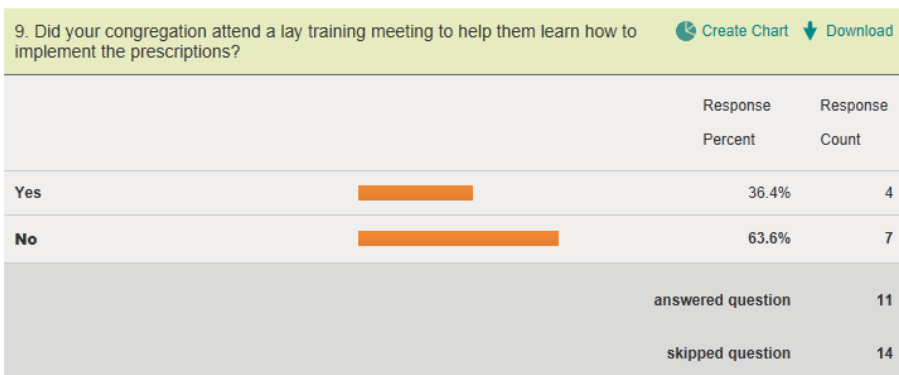


Dr. Borden's success stories with churches across the nation and across denominational lines added import and weight to his presentations and instilled hope that healthy change was possible for any congregation willing to obey Christ's Great Commission. He was careful to point out that the success rate was about 50% of churches which voted for the prescriptions.

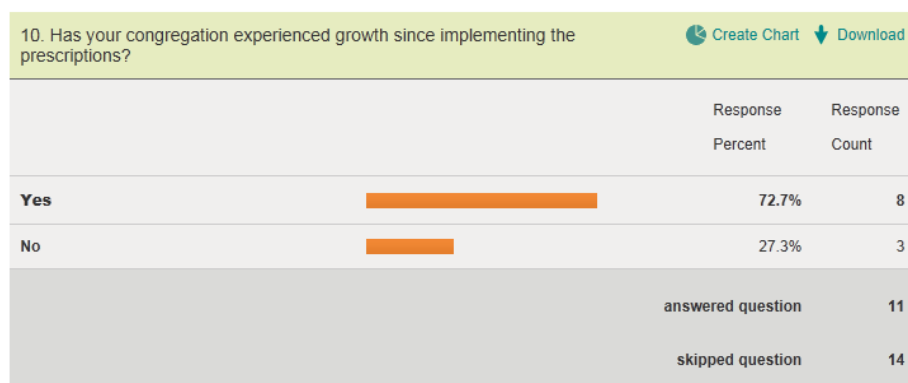
Seven pastors stated they had held town hall meetings following the consultation while four responded that they had not held the meetings. These meetings provided a platform for the congregation to discuss the prescriptions and their consequences, ask questions for clarity, and vent their fears and frustrations prior to the vote on the prescriptions. 80% of those who conducted the weekend consultation voted for the prescriptions, which mirrors the results in the Norfolk association.



Involvement in the Lay Training events was less desirable to the pastors and churches than the cluster or the weekend consultation. 36% stated they had attended the events while 64% gave a negative response.



73% agreed that their congregation has experienced growth as a result of implementing the prescriptions, while 27% disagreed. The Norfolk association churches experienced something closer to the average; 50% of the churches who voted for the prescriptions written by the consultant experienced measurable growth, while 50% did not.



Significant Factors

Of the known Southern Baptist pastors who have participated in at least one segment of the GHC process, 27% responded to the survey request. Of those who took the survey, 92% indicated they had participated in the pastors' cluster, 40% participated in both the pastors' cluster and the weekend consultation, while 16% participated in all three events. Of those who were involved in the weekend consultation, 80% agreed to implement the consultant's prescriptions and 73% of those have experienced growth as a direct result of this action. This, combined with the observed success in the Norfolk

churches, leads the author to conclude that the GHC process is sound and capable of producing the revitalization needed in Southern Baptist congregations.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of the GHC Process

Several observed and definable strengths and weaknesses of the GHC process come to light through the author's research:

First, the clusters will develop critical and intimate relationships between the pastors in attendance. Each month a previously selected pastor will sit in the "hot seat," and answer these questions before his peers: 1) How are you doing as a man? 2) How are you doing as a father? 3) How are you doing as a husband? 4) How are you doing as a man of God? The emotional connectedness among the pastors was also developed by encouraging each man to share his true feelings, frustrations, and fears about the process. The weakness in the pastors' cluster involves the selection of the right group of pastors. Unmotivated pastors tended to discourage motivated pastors from speaking. Jealousy over success or disdain over lack of success quickly eroded the level of intimacy in the group, forcing the mentor to re-establish guidelines of confidentiality and encouragement. It became obvious that some pastors would never overcome their fear of failure. Their personal insecurities and unwillingness to develop better leadership skills hindered them from successfully negotiating their churches through the process. The other pastors had the same fears, but faced their fears with faith and led their churches to participate in the weekend cluster, even if the prescriptions were voted down.

A second weakness uncovered in the pastors' cluster was the selection of books to be read by the pastors. Books written to influence the business world were generally not

well-received or appreciated by the pastors. While these books are capable of providing some help to pastors, the applicable principles were difficult to locate and limited the discussion of the book details during the cluster meeting. The author's recommendation is that books dealing with actual church issues be the normative choice for reading materials by the pastors.

The weekend consultation process provides an excellent opportunity for the pastor and congregation to exchange ideas about what needs to change to move forward. The pre-consultation work required of the congregation by the consultant is voluminous and unnecessary. The smaller congregations and their pastors had great difficulty putting all of the materials together, leaving the consultant uninformed as he entered the consultation. The medium-sized congregations were able to put together their materials because they had adequate personnel to do the research. A better system would require less research from the small congregations, seeking only the prescription-specific information needed to produce the correct prescriptions for change.

The discussion among the cross-section of members held on Friday night gave the most effective results of the weekend. Frank, open-ended questions and answers provided opportunities for people who barely knew each other to talk about something that mattered greatly to each of them – the health and future of their congregation. The leadership interviews provided information as well, but the consultant used the setting to determine who would be in favor of the prescriptions and who would be opposed to them.

One weakness exemplified in the prescriptions written by the consultant to the Norfolk churches was the appearance of having used a standard template or format for all of the churches. The language and prescriptions were generally the same and, when

members from different congregations compared their prescriptions, alarm was raised that each group was not being treated with the uniqueness they felt they deserved. Dr. Borden's vast experience with hundreds of congregations has helped him develop a format that works in most situations; this became an obstacle to the Norfolk churches.

Borden's process involves what he refers to as a "gag" prescription;¹ asking the congregation to adopt a practice that will be very difficult for them to do. His experience has led him to believe that this is necessary for the church to take the prescriptions seriously when they vote. These difficult changes often caused the lead pastor to become fearful of losing his job if he forced the people to make the changes.

Each of the churches involved in the consultation stated their greatest strength was their friendliness or their sense of family and belonging. Their greatest weakness was lack of growth and new members. They each loved their pastor and his family and appreciated the pastor's visionary leadership. The Saturday training session with the key leaders was followed by a meeting of the consultation team with Dr. Borden, who had written a draft of the prescriptions for the team to edit. The prescriptions were written to offset the five greatest weaknesses of the congregation. Borden had studied the pre-consultation report thoroughly and combined his insights with the leadership interview responses to determine the five weaknesses.

In each session he defined the "gag" prescription and asked the team for their opinion on the probability of success. He was careful to help them understand that they

¹Paul D. Borden, *Assaulting the Gates: Aiming All God's People at the Mission Field*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 115.

did not want to “choke” the church by making the task impossible; they merely wanted to shock them a little bit with a task that would require real and definite change.

One example of a “gag” prescription involved interchanging the worship service and the Sunday school. The worship service would be held first, at 9:30 a.m., followed by the Sunday school at 11 a.m. The purpose stated by Borden was to offset the group of people who were leaving after Sunday school and to provide a time for discipleship when more people would attend. The congregation resisted the idea in the beginning but eventually voted in all five prescriptions, including the time change, to see their numbers increase in both time slots.

Another congregation was given the prescription of doing a ministry mission audit of every organization in the church, with the understanding that all organizations which did not show how they were making new disciples would be shut down immediately. The congregation voted down the prescriptions because this seemed too divisive to them.

A third congregation was given the prescription of disbanding their leadership team and giving the leadership and decision-making over to a temporary governing board, consisting of three experienced church growth leaders, who would guide them in making healthy choices. This congregation agreed to the concept, the governing board began its work, but the pastor was too insecure and emotionally unstable to lead the church, resulting in a collapse of the momentum gained by the process.

One weakness observed in the prescription writing process was the insistence by Borden that the local association cut off all assistance to any congregation that did not decide in favor of the prescriptions. While this has proven to be an effective method in

Borden's GHC association, it was offensive to the Tidewater congregations and leadership teams. Dr. Borden mentioned, in his phone interview, that the Norfolk association was a unique experience for him. He believes the history of the Norfolk area, combined with the resistance to authoritative leadership, provided an obstacle to his proposals.²

A recommended improvement to the extreme act of disassociating with a congregation that refuses to vote in the prescriptions is to use the weekend consultation as a starting place to begin the process of revitalization in the congregation. Similar to a physician writing a prescription on a trial basis, with a follow-up appointment to measure results, the consulting team would give the congregation a set of simple prescriptions to implement and remain in communication with them to make sure they are doing what was prescribed and making changes where the prescriptions are not working. Borden's one weekend visit with no flexibility in the prescriptions comes across as inflexible and overbearing to congregations who are not accustomed to demanding leadership.

Another improvement to the GHC process involves establishing a prayer force of people in the congregation and across the association who will intercede specifically for each congregation and their leaders as they embark on the process of change.

The Lay Training sessions are designed to reinforce Borden's philosophy of church governance, which involves moving a congregationally-led church to a staff-led and elders-governed church.³ While this system may be effective in the churches on the West Coast who are associated with Borden's leadership, the Southern Baptist system of

² Borden phone interview.

³ Borden insists, and includes in his prescriptions, that each congregation read and adapt the Accountable Leadership system promoted by John Kaiser in his book, *Winning on Purpose*.

congregational governance through committees and teams is entrenched in the minds of its current core members. It is not recommended that a pastor lead his church to adopt this system; he will probably lose his job in the process. A better plan is to push for a ministry mission audit among the current structures and groups in the congregation. This can be biblically and logically promoted in a way that is understandable and agreeable to Southern Baptist congregations.

CHAPTER III

Seven Core Values of Growing Healthy Churches

Every organization, including churches, has values, whether those values are stated or unstated. Congregations which have identified their values at some point in the past tend to list them on paper without including the values in how they behave.

Choosing and implementing the right values is critical in fulfilling the church's mission and vision. "Churches seeking transformational ministries embrace the right values."¹

The truth is that every church is driven by values. The question is whether or not they are the right values. If a church is content not reaching people for Christ, they are being driven by the wrong values. Therefore, if a church is going to transition to effectiveness, the right values need to be poured into them. When a leader consistently pours scriptural values into the church, those values will begin lighting the fire of the people. With the right values driving them, they won't have to be pushed. They'll have the fuel necessary for driving toward the purpose.²

The question each leader and church must answer is, "Are we being driven by the right values?" If a church is going to transition, the appropriate values need to be spelled out and poured into the church.³

John Kaiser stresses that it is the organization's deepest values, which are identified by where money, time, and attention are allocated, which are its true values, not the "core values" listed on some internal document or placed on a plaque in the entryway.⁴ Stephen Macchia describes the core values as "the beliefs, intuition, and

¹ Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations*. (Nashville: B and H Publishing Group, 2010), 35.

² Brad Powell, *Change Your Church for Good: The Art of Sacred Cow Tipping*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007) Locations 2718-2722.

³ Ibid. Locations 2742-2744.

⁴ John E. Kaiser, *Winning On Purpose: How To Organize Congregations to Succeed in Their Mission* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006) Locations 289-290.

values that motivate your church . . . the spiritual and philosophical underpinnings that inspire you to action.”⁵

Values are the boundaries that guide the church’s mission. All congregations have values; the defining question is whether those values reflect an inward or outward focus. A church turnaround cannot occur unless new values are adopted which reflect the turning of the focus away from the congregation and toward the community.⁶

Dr. Borden and his GHC team have identified seven core values necessary to effectively transition a church from a place of non-growth to a place of healthy growth.

1. Laser Focus on the Great Commission

Every congregation has the same mission: to make more disciples for Jesus Christ.⁷ Because that is the mission of the congregation, they should be held accountable for consistently making new disciples every year. When a pastor and congregation decide to enter the GHC process through the local association of churches, they agree to be held responsible and accountable for the number of new disciples made during the year. Baptisms and new members classes numbers are reported monthly to the associational office and to the monthly pastors’ meeting, in which the numbers are discussed and reviewed.

⁵ Stephen Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church: Ten Traits of a Vital Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999) Locations 2151-2153.

⁶ Borden, *Direct*, Location 1405.

⁷ Borden, *Assaulting*, 38.

Congregations who fail to make disciples are unhealthy and must be made aware of the fact that they are being disobedient to the Lord of the church. They are failing to fulfill the purpose for which the church was founded. When a congregation admits their sin and asks forgiveness, God forgives and begins to help them change their ways.⁸ One of the goals of the consultation team is to convince the congregation of their disobedience and move them to a place of repentance and obedience to the Great Commission.

Ed Stetzer and Thom Rainer, in *Transformational Church*, insist that an obedient congregation must focus stubbornly on the gospel's ability to change people. It must hold to the right values that support its mission.⁹

“Transformational Churches are not places with a set number of programs but places that know how to prioritize their activities. They have assessed their context in relation to their values, and it drives what they do. Rather than holding on to activities for tradition's sake, they act according to what is contextually appropriate to fulfill their values.”¹⁰

Rick Richardson, in *Reimagining Evangelism: Inviting Friends on a Spiritual Journey*, says that the pastor must set the pace of evangelism, cast the vision for evangelism, clarify the mission, and help people get involved in evangelism. If this does not occur, very few people will ever come to know Christ through the community of the congregation.¹¹ Fulfilling the Great Commission requires regular evaluation of a church's program and ministries; the church can spread itself too thin by trying to do too much.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Stetzer, *Transformational*, 10.

¹⁰ Ibid., 37.

¹¹ Rick Richardson, *Reimagining Evangelism: Inviting Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006) (Kindle Locations 521-522).

The most effective ministries maintain a laser focus on their mission and vision, ruthlessly eliminating anything that does not fit that strategy.¹²

Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by leaders of traditional churches who want to involve their congregations in the Great Commission is the commitment these congregations have to rules, regulations, and rituals. Younger churches tend to be bound together by a sense of purpose and mission.¹³ Nothing discourages a church more than not knowing why it exists. The quickest way to reinvigorate a plateaued or declining church, according to Rick Warren, is to reclaim God's purpose for it and help the members understand the great tasks the church has been given by Christ.¹⁴

Craig Groeschel agrees, "Without a compelling vision, the organization is quickly pulled off center. People get confused, distracted, and bored. Without even noticing, the original mission fades as the organization drifts."¹⁵ It is impossible for a congregation to be truly healthy without a commitment to sharing the love of Jesus Christ with a lost and dying world.¹⁶

The church in North America seems to have forgotten its mission and its message. Many churches are simply trying to satisfy their own preferences, which disconnect them from Jesus' directive, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 20:21) Jesus

¹² Tony Morgan and Tim Stevens, *Simply Strategic Volunteers: Empowering People for Ministry*, (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2005) 228.

¹³ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 77.

¹⁴ Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 87.

¹⁵ Craig Groeschel, *It: How Churches and Leaders Can Get It and Keep It* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 40.

¹⁶ Macchia, *Healthy Church*, Location 1701.

gave this commission to disciples who were hiding behind closed doors. The challenge existed to move them from hiding to engaging their community for the sake of the gospel. His directive is still in effect today; each congregation is God's instrument to reach the world, and that includes reaching their community.¹⁷

2. Congregational Health Produces Growth

The GHC philosophy, transferrable to the local congregation, promotes the truth that God has designed all living things to be healthy, to grow and to reproduce. Since the church is a living organism, God expects it to grow. Borden states,

"Any congregation will grow when it is healthy, regardless of its location. This means that congregations that are not growing through making new disciples are sick. Such congregations must be confronted about such lack of health. These congregations must then be taught how to address the issues that contribute to their illness, while also addressing those ideas that will bring health. We do know what it takes to lead a congregation from sickness to health."¹⁸

Macchia identifies ten traits to be found in a healthy congregation and states the need to know what a healthy church looks like so we can learn how to make sick churches healthy.¹⁹ This growth involves more than just attendance numbers; it includes personal spiritual growth among the members of the congregation. Growth among the members is not enough, however. Evangelistic outreach will always produce numerical

¹⁷ Ed Stetzer and David Putman. *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community*, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2006), 30-31.

¹⁸ Borden, *Assaulting*, 39.

¹⁹ Macchia, *Healthy Churches*, location 61. Macchia's health indicators for congregations include God's empowering presence, God-exalting worship, spiritual disciplines, learning and growing in community, a commitment to loving and caring relationships, servant-leadership development, an outward focus, wise administration and accountability, networking with the body of Christ, and stewardship and generosity.

growth; leading the new believers into a structured discipleship program will increase congregational health.

Borden and his GHC team assert that large and small congregations can be either healthy or dysfunctional. Most small congregations in North America, however, remain that way because they are spiritually unhealthy and organizationally dysfunctional. Large congregations have typically pursued organizational and spiritual health. If small congregations are healthy, they will not remain small; they will grow and reproduce. “Size in congregations, like growth in children, is related to health or illness.”²⁰

Smaller congregations are often filled with a multiplicity of missions and visions; different individuals or groups are promoting their own agendas while ignoring the church’s common mission and vision. In these congregations, the needs and feelings of individuals usually take precedence over the mission and vision. Smaller congregations remain small and filled with dysfunction because their focus is on what is best for the congregation rather than those for whom the congregation is responsible, the community outside the congregation.²¹

Unhealthy congregations must come to understand that their primary reason for existence is not to serve themselves. The leaders must teach the people that they are on a mission from God to reach people who do not know God or have a relationship with Jesus and help those people become disciples of Jesus. This mission, in every decision

²⁰ Borden, *Bullseye*, Locations 606-610.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Locations 649-652.

and action of the congregation, must take priority over the self-interests of the congregation.²²

A congregation must also stop seeing itself as a friendly place and begin viewing its purpose as a place where people can make friends. A healthy, growing congregation is always forming new groups so that new people can develop new relationships with those inside the congregation.²³

The pastor and leaders should teach the people to expect church growth and health. If a year passes, and baptisms and conversions have decreased, the congregation should be disturbed. The church exists for others, and when others stop coming to Christ, congregations should care enough about their mission to investigate the problem and resolve it.²⁴

“Healthy congregations are outward-focused, and they maintain that focus against tremendous forces that are constantly encouraging an inward bent. Such congregations are led by leaders who regularly implement change. Such leaders create an environment where change becomes the norm and maintaining the status quo is unacceptable.”²⁵

3. Ruthless Accountability

Accountability measures must be put into place in order for real change to occur. Stetzer states, “Churches that are seeing lives transformed hold themselves accountable for more. They hold a high emphasis on accountability. Transformational Churches are

²² Ibid., Location 984.

²³ Ibid., Location 991.

²⁴ Ibid., Location 1609.

²⁵ Ibid., Locations 174-175.

places where their values and actions are made clear and the people have embraced the need to live them out.”²⁶

Accountability is an organizational discipline which involves the hard work of holding one another accountable for agreed upon goals. GHC promotes the Accountable Leadership Model, developed by John Kaiser, which combines responsibility, authority, and accountability. Those who direct ministries are given the freedom to lead their areas as they see fit while being held accountable for goals.²⁷

Professional clergy have a tendency to ignore accountability, but without accountability there will be no change. Often this avoidance of accountability happens because the review process determines who is responsible for either success or failure.²⁸ Transformational pastors should enter into an accountability relationship with their leadership team, church board, or council for the achievement of goals. The local association should also hold pastors accountable to one another in the monthly cluster meeting.²⁹

Leaders need clear and intentional accountability³⁰ to assist them in meeting their goals and objectives. Those accountability structures must not hinder or bridle the leader’s ability to lead. They should encourage and insure that the leader is living a life of godly character, leading the church to fulfill God’s purposes, and remaining true to the

²⁶ Stetzer, *Transformational*, 27.

²⁷ Borden, *Assaulting*, 37.

²⁸ Borden, *Direct*, Location 405.

²⁹ Borden, *Assaulting*, 39.

³⁰ Powell, Locations 2204-2205.

Word of God in what he teaches. Healthy accountability measures do not require a vote or permission for every decision the leader makes or for every dollar they spend. Those decisions and dollars should be reviewed based on the impact they are having on obeying the Great Commission.³¹

Borden insists churches and pastors should be held accountable for two measurable numbers: the number of individuals who will become new disciples of Jesus Christ in the next five years and the number of individuals the congregation will touch at least once with the love of Jesus Christ over the next five years.³² The first number is the evangelism goal; it motivates the congregation and forces the leaders to strategize to achieve their vision. The second number includes, for example, people who will attend worship services only once a year, those who are fed through a food pantry, children reached through Vacation Bible School, young people who attend the youth meetings or go on a mission trip. The second number is the one that usually motivates people initially.³³

Borden clarifies the reasons for making leaders accountable:

“Missional leaders are open to accountability because they clearly understand that any successful mission must be determined by both the losses incurred and the number of new recruits brought into the kingdom of God. Each effort must be evaluated to see if it has produced the gains that honor the Church's founder and are blessed by the Holy Spirit. If the engagement has failed, the leader wants to know and understand why so that it does not happen again at the expense of precious resources.”³⁴

³¹ Powell, Locations 2209-2210.

³² Paul D. Borden, *Make or Break Your Church in 365 Days: A Daily Guide to Leading Effective Change*. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2012), Locations 1951-1956.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Borden, *Direct*, Locations 362-365.

Rigorous accountability must be introduced into the diseased congregation so there is clear evidence that the mission is or is not being accomplished.³⁵

When Dr. Borden visited the NABA organization in the spring of 2009 and presented his case for adopting the GHC process, he cited the growth of churches in his association based on the following key assumptions:

- 1). People must be attracted to accountability; they cannot be compelled.
- 2). Change will not occur in dying organizations without significant pain.
- 3). Leaders who desire change must lead from knowledge in four areas: accountability, leadership, congregational health, and missional thinking.³⁶

4. God Expects Shepherds to Lead

Borden believes a key ingredient in moving a congregation from dysfunction to health is finding the right leader. It is a foundational biblical principle based on the New Testament gift of leadership. It takes courage, passion, and willingness to risk, combined with an understanding of the basic principles required for change, to form a transformational leader.³⁷

"Shepherds are entrepreneurs who lead sheep into green pastures and by still waters in order to eventually shear them and get them to reproduce;"³⁸ this truth requires

³⁵ Ibid., Location 1213.

³⁶ Notes taken on June 9, 2009; *Great Commission Breakthrough Initial Meeting*, Chesapeake, Virginia.

³⁷ Borden, *Bullseye*, Location 1199.

³⁸ Borden, *Assaulting*, 40.

pastors to be leaders, not chaplains. Chaplains are hired to care for the needs of the congregation, but shepherds are called to keep the congregation healthy, multiplying and growing. The GHC process focuses on training leaders and asks those pastors who do not have either the gift or the talent for leadership to exercise learned leadership behavior. The monthly cluster meeting and the congregational coaching process is where leadership behavior is taught.

Pastors must continually develop their leadership behavioral skills.³⁹ “A transformational leader will develop a plan of action, mobilize the workforce, and unleash power by vocalizing the core values of the system.”⁴⁰ Once the intervention by the consultation team has occurred, the pastor becomes the key to implementing the changes agreed to by the congregation. If left to themselves, the people will once again become focused inward rather than outward. It is the pastor’s responsibility to keep this myopic inevitability from happening. He becomes the main vision caster, the team leader trainer, and the spiritual leader; if he fails to lead at this time, the momentum will be lost and the turnaround will not succeed.

Moving from the role of a chaplain to that of spiritual leader, mobilizing a group of people to achieve a mission and accomplish a vision, requires adjusting methods and the content of preaching. The pulpit must become a place from which the pastor rallies the people to take on God’s mission. The pastor/leader must use the pulpit to transform, not merely inform, the congregation.⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Robert E. Quinn, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), Location 1079.

⁴¹ Borden, *Direct*, Location 1319.

“If you believe that mission happens naturally in congregations through business as usual, then the only kind of pastoral leadership you need is operational leadership: someone to preach the Word, conduct services, oversee programs, and keep the campers happy. If, however, you believe that mission happens only through the courage to continually realign an organization's culture with the values of Christ, then you need something more in a pastor. You need transformational leadership.”⁴²

Leading congregational transformation with improper training raises the challenge level to an almost impossible scale.⁴³ Unless the pastor is willing to be trained by a mentor who leads a congregation larger than his own, the growth process probably will not happen. The GHC process encourages pastors to be lifelong learners by placing them with willing mentors who can help them focus on the right things to accomplish the church's mission.⁴⁴

The majority of congregations in wealthy nations are in decline or on a plateau. Many of these congregations were at one time healthy, growing, and doing effective ministry for those who attend as well as for those in the communities in which they exist. However, the opposite is now the case for most. There is little effective ministry occurring, primarily due to the fact that congregations are unhealthy and conduct community life in dysfunctional ways. Leading these congregations to experience systemic change is almost impossible, and most pastors, despite their desire, cannot accomplish the task by themselves.⁴⁵

The job of transformational leader of a dysfunctional congregation carries with it the elements of hard work, willingness to lose the battle, and great pain in the process of winning. Unless the pastor understands the personal cost involved in moving a church forward, he is not ready to step up and lead.⁴⁶

⁴² Kaiser, *Locations* 305-307.

⁴³ Borden, *Direct*, Location 1324.

⁴⁴ Borden, *Assaulting*, 27.

⁴⁵ Borden, *Direct*, Locations 1010-1013.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Location 968.

5. God Expects Congregations to Influence Their Communities

Borden states, “Growing congregations think like missionaries. Healthy congregations are always removing cultural barriers and building cultural bridges to people in order to reach them.”⁴⁷ The pastor must lead the entire congregation to change from conducting ministry for personal consumption to conducting ministry for the purpose of transforming the community.⁴⁸ He must “exegete” the community surround the church by walking, riding, and driving through the community. The community’s values, interests, desires, and aspirations must be researched by reading local newspapers, Web sites, blogs, editorials, and letters to the editor. He should interview prominent individuals in the community, talk with strangers at shopping centers, and communicate with people who are open to talking about the community.⁴⁹

After conducting the research, the pastor/leader must then synthesize what he has learned to articulate the community’s values, its image of itself, its vision for the future, and how it relates to other communities in the city.⁵⁰ This process will prepare him for pastoring his congregation and leading the church to reach its community more effectively.

Smaller congregations stay small and become unhealthy because the needs of individuals take precedence over the mission and vision. Large congregations can experience sudden decline when their focus is removed from the community and

⁴⁷ Ibid., Location 1421.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Location 178.

⁴⁹ Ibid., Locations 447-449.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Location 460.

redirected toward what is best for those within the congregation.⁵¹ Each congregation is called to reach a particular segment of their community. Jesus Christ places a large variety of members in one local body; He has often put a variety of bodies in one local community.⁵²

According to Borden, large congregations are a cultural mandate because our culture insists that influence is related to size. Large stores and institutions attract more customers than do the small stores who are owned by small shopkeepers. Because Americans shop in these large institutions, they have influence over people and society. Larger congregations can influence communities for the Gospel and for Jesus Christ in ways that smaller congregations cannot. Pastors are called to pastor their community, not just their congregation.⁵³

Five issues facing smaller congregations who want to move from spiritual and organizational dysfunction to spiritual and organization health involve acting the size they want to become, becoming outward focused in mission, developing a vision to change a community, adopting values aligned with an outward-focused mission and vision, and developing a structure that enhances an outward mission and vision.⁵⁴

Macchia lists the actions a church must take, once they have done the research on their community. First, they must express unconditional love and acceptance to members of the community. Second, the congregation must encourage authenticity, transparency,

⁵¹ Borden, *Bullseye*, Location 624.

⁵² Borden, *Bullseye*, Location 902.

⁵³ Borden, *Assaulting*, 40.

⁵⁴ Borden, *Bullseye*, Location 1063.

honesty, and integrity to gain the community's trust. Third, grace, mercy, and forgiveness must be exhibited by the congregation toward the community. Fourth, a congregation must communicate by listening to the community and assist in resolving conflicts within the community. A fifth action to be taken is to establish ways to bear one another's burdens. Sixth, the congregation must welcome diversity into their fellowship if they are to be effective in reaching their community. Seventh, intentional ministries designed to equip families must be established.⁵⁵

6. The Church of Jesus Christ is a Missional Entity

God did not design the church for Christians; he designed the church to attack the gates of hell. The church is not a place of safety for believers but a gathering place to accomplish mission. Unfortunately, most Christians believe their congregation exists for them. GHC believes the opposite, which is the reason so many of their congregations are outward in their orientation. This philosophy eliminates many of the issues Christians fight over; the genre of music, the time of worship services, the structure of the congregation, and even the denominational label do not matter if the mission has been accomplished.⁵⁶

Since each congregation is a Missional entity, each pastor is a missionary. Missionaries become amateur students of the culture. They worked to remove the

⁵⁵ Macchia, *Healthy Church*, 98-110.

⁵⁶ Borden, *Assaulting*, 40-41.

cultural barriers that hinder people from hearing the gospel. They build cultural bridges that help people meet God through faith in Jesus Christ.⁵⁷

Leaders face two cross-cultural situations which must be addressed. Our nation is now primarily a pagan nation and the church of Jesus Christ is dismissed by most Americans as irrelevant. Pastors must teach their congregants to think and behave as missionaries to a foreign culture. The second cross-cultural situation involves the mindset of the congregation. Most members of today's churches think the church exists to meet their needs. They do not see how or why the resources of the congregation should be used to reach others.⁵⁸

“Leaders demonstrate a heart for the culture. Engagement into the community is done with relational intention, and the churches pray for their community. Simply put, Transformational Churches know, understand, and are deeply in love with their cities, communities, and people.”⁵⁹

Each congregation faces three distinct cultures with which it must deal: the national culture, grouped by generational distinctions, consumer-oriented, computer literate, and networked socially. The local culture, which can be delineated by micro cultures within the city, is more narrowly understood and reachable to the church. The third culture is that of each congregation. Understanding its reason for being birthed, the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Borden, *Assaulting*, Locations 1238-1240.

⁵⁹ Stetzer, *Transformational*, 47.

early events that shaped its values, the past leaders and current influencers in the congregation, make each church unique.⁶⁰

The church exists to be God's missionary entity in this world to call men and women to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Each local church, because it belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, is to be actively involved in carrying out His mission as its primary responsibility, above all other responsibilities.⁶¹ The church was not designed merely to cater to the demands of its members; it was instituted to be a passionate, missional group of people whose main function is to turn lost people into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.⁶²

“Missional congregations don't just do missional ministries. Missional congregations exist to do ministry to accomplish the mission. This means the congregation doesn't exist just to recruit disciples to act missionally when they are living life throughout the week, although hopefully that occurs. Missional congregations act corporately to carry out the mission. A congregation of eighty in a community of eight thousand understands that Jesus has called those eighty people to change the way the community of eight thousand thinks, functions, and behaves.”⁶³

Unfortunately, the institutional church has forgotten its primary mission and accepted a secondary, inferior mission to provide service and fulfillment to those who already know Christ. This has caused the church to become ineffective in changing the culture around it and impotent in meeting its mandate from the Master.⁶⁴ All healthy

⁶⁰ Borden, *Make or Break*, Locations 1127-1133.

⁶¹ Borden, *Bullseye*, Location 1540.

⁶² Borden, *Direct*, Location 347.

⁶³ Borden, *Make or Break*, Locations 1924-1928.

⁶⁴ Borden, *Direct*, Location 351.

congregations are missional and understand that true spirituality is being joined to God's mission, which is the same for all congregations.⁶⁵

One question each congregation must ask is, "Is this church a missional entity, or is it merely an organization with a mission statement?"⁶⁶ One way to bridge the chasm between the latter and the former is through conducting annual missional audits. Missional audits must be established by the pastor and congregation to determine how each of the congregation's ministries can be brought into alignment with the mission. If a ministry cannot be brought into alignment, it should be discarded. A non-aligned ministry works against the mission, even if it is a benign ministry.⁶⁷ In like manner, ministries that do not grow must either be changed or eliminated.⁶⁸

Two major questions must be asked at all times of all ministries in a congregation: First, How does this ministry contribute to an outward-focused mission? Does it attract new, unchurched people? Do the people leading this ministry understand its strategic significance, and are they intentionally designing it to reach people? Is this ministry growing? Second, what is the strategy that underlies all of what we do with our ministry? Do our ministries reflect missionary thinking?⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Ibid., Location 793.

⁶⁶ Borden, *Assaulting*, Location 1234.

⁶⁷ Borden, *Direct*, Location 797.

⁶⁸ Ibid., Location 1423.

⁶⁹ Borden, *Direct*, Locations 1424-1426.

7. The Bottom Line is Reproduction

Spiritually mature congregations are those involved in reproducing. Whether through multiple services, multiple venues, or even separate congregations, spiritually mature congregations are constantly involved in the reproduction of new congregations.⁷⁰ Jesus often reminded his followers that their mission was one of reproduction, both individually and collectively; this is done by making more disciples. Once a congregation understands this challenge and accepts the responsibility involved in obeying Christ, a strategy can be developed to implement both the understanding and the choice to obey Him.⁷¹

One mark of maturity among animals and humans is the ability and desire to reproduce. This factor carries over into the spiritual realm; spiritually mature believers are those who are involved in the process of making new disciples. The goal for every congregation is to reproduce new disciples individually and corporately through new groups of disciples.⁷² Effective congregations are healthy, growing, committed to reproduction, and open to changes that will move them from one level of effectiveness to the next.⁷³

The strategy of GHC, based on these principles, was developed by Borden as the result of a combination of experiences in his ministry. While pastoring the Bear Valley Baptist Church in Denver, Colorado, Borden read *Church Unleashed* by Frank

⁷⁰ Borden, *Assaulting*, 41.

⁷¹ Borden, *Make or Break*, Location 675.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Borden, *Direct*, Location 173.

Tillapaugh and applied the book's ideas to the congregation's outreach ministries. He led the church to minister to the inner city by identifying thirty-five target groups. Borden learned how to grow a church in a non-growing area. He discovered that church growth has little to do with geography. He began consulting small congregations in Kansas and Nebraska, teaching them how to have highly effective ministries.⁷⁴ He spent several years with Leith Anderson and the Teaching Church Network, developing the structure of the GHC process.

When asked if his group faces consistent obstacles in implementing the process in churches, Borden listed three: first, the theological issue involved in recommending a change in polity; "every congregation believes their polity comes from the Bible." According to Borden, the Southern Baptists pattern their leadership systems after the United States Constitution, not the biblical mandate.⁷⁵

A second obstacle faced in churches involves the "church bosses;" when they understand the concepts the process entails, it becomes clear to them that they will be removed from power. Pragmatically, this obstacle is more difficult to breach than the theological because it is an emotional issue rather than a logical one.⁷⁶

A third obstacle originates with the pastors who realize they will be held accountable for their leadership. Since the new system places the pastor in the leadership position, "if things don't happen, it is the leader's fault."⁷⁷

⁷⁴Phone interview with Dr. Borden, July 27, 2012.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

The Monthly Pastors' Cluster Meeting

The GHC program underscores the critical importance of coaching and mentoring at both the pastoral and congregational level. Three forms of coaching are provided: mentoring in peer-to-peer clusters, one-on-one coaching between a peer with proven leadership skill development experience and a pastor needing to improve those skills, and congregational coaching.¹

Each cluster consists of five to seven pastors, often based on geographical proximity to one another. One obvious advantage of geographical grouping is the relationship building which occurs during the cluster meeting; this encourages greater interaction with one another and between congregations and minimizes the competitiveness that often exists between churches in proximity to one another.²

One disadvantage of the cluster is the mixture of ineffective pastors with effective pastors; this may lower the level of learning and has been known to cause more effective pastors to become less motivated to participate in the cluster. Another issue can surface among the pastors of smaller congregations, who can become less motivated to listen when larger congregational situations are being discussed, since they have not experienced these difficulties. A solution for these problems can be found in affinity-based clusters. Placing highly motivated pastors, who are effective in leading their

¹ Borden, *Assaulting*, 122.

² *Ibid.*, 124.

congregations, in the same cluster, can be a better experience for them. Because they are able to see how the training fits them and their situation, they can learn from their peers. The camaraderie and connection in an affinity-based group may not occur in other types of clusters.³ However, the less effective pastors miss out on the opportunity to learn from their more effective peers when an affinity-based group is established.

Pastors who are not as effective as other pastors, when placed in clusters together, can create an environment without momentum or excitement; less learning occurs and leadership skills are developed more slowly than if placed beside effective leaders.⁴

A third type of cluster, valued by younger pastors who appreciate the connectivity available over the Internet, is the virtual cluster. These pastors are able to meet through instant messaging, blogs, and webinars, eliminating travel, time, and expenses.⁵ The materials are presented online and conversation is held through a combination of audio and visual media. The mentor must follow up the conversation with a call to each participating pastor to discuss implementation and accountability. Multiple sources of contact, such as emails, text messages, and phone calls are made among the pastors between the online meetings to maintain a sense of community and accountability.⁶

³ Ibid., 124-125.

⁴ Ibid., 125.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 126.

The Mentor

The peer-to-peer mentoring cluster is led by a cluster mentor who commits to a long-term relationship with a group of pastors or staff members to help develop their pastoral leadership skills, encourage and counsel them as they make critical and hard decisions, and guide them as they improve their ability to lead a congregation. The mentor assists the pastors in establishing personal and professional goals and holds them accountable for reaching those goals.⁷ The mentor must be a full-time practitioner who is a part-time mentor and coach to the cluster pastors. He must excel in his experience over the other pastors in the group; otherwise, the group will “end up pooling their ignorance and reaching the lowest common denominator of learning and produce no accountable behaviors that lead to systemic change.”⁸ The mentor pastor must have been more successful in leading their congregation to growth than the ones he is coaching and mentoring. He must also be capable of holding the pastors in the clusters accountable for their measurable goals; otherwise, congregational transformation will not occur.⁹

The cluster mentor sets the agenda for their clusters by choosing the teaching topics, the books and resources to be used, and how each meeting will be structured. The associational director makes curriculum available, but the mentor can either accept or decline the curriculum.¹⁰ Mentors are instructed to provide training in leadership and congregational health and growth, actively engage pastors to improve their spiritual

⁷ Ibid., 122.

⁸ Ibid., 123.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 126.

formation, teach them self-care for themselves and their families, encourage community among the pastors in the cluster, and insist on accountability for professional and personal growth.¹¹

The mentor takes responsibility for what happens in the cluster and contacts pastors who miss the meetings to see how they can help them address any issues hindering them from maintaining the process. Because the mentor leads a larger congregation than the participating pastors, he may encourage his congregation to assist a struggling church or pastor with resources to enhance their ministry.¹²

Mentors must practice good leadership and integrity in their own congregations, read more books than most pastors in their cluster, and attend seminars and training events to improve their own personal skills.¹³

The mentor expects each pastor to set goals in their personal and professional lives, interacts with them periodically to measure progress toward those goals, and holds the pastor accountable for meeting the goals. If the pastor does not set goals or consistently misses the goals he has set, the mentor leads by asking the pastor to no longer be involved in the cluster. This does not mean the pastor has subjugated his authority to the mentor, but he has willingly embraced this accountability.¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid., 127.

¹² Ibid., 127.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Selecting and Recruiting Pastors

The pastor is considered the leader in most Southern Baptist congregations and must be enlisted and equipped for the turnaround process if change is to occur.

Transformation and reproduction is inseparably connected to the pastor's ability to lead the congregation.¹⁵ The monthly cluster meeting is designed to unite a group of five to seven pastors for the purpose of training them in leadership and church growth and health principles.

Only senior pastors are invited to the cluster meetings; adding staff members to the group inhibits the sharing of staffing issues which may be hindering church growth.¹⁶ Choosing the right pastors to be involved in the first cluster is vitally important to scoring early victories so the program can find acceptance and momentum throughout the local association.¹⁷

The process of selecting pastors should begin at the associational level to determine if there is enough support among the leaders to assure its implementation. The cluster concept should be presented as urgent, supported by the condition of the churches in the association. The vision and strategy of a cluster meeting is presented as a way to see actual change occur in individual congregations and, ultimately, the association itself.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid., 50.

¹⁶ Ibid., 50.

¹⁷ Ibid., 51.

¹⁸ Ibid.

As interest and curiosity grows among the pastors, a form is given to all who are interested, with the understanding that the applicant might possibly be selected to participate in this new experiment. The first couple of clusters should be made aware of the fact that they are being used as test groups, to pave the way for others who will follow in future groups. This strategy allows a way of dealing with the hurt feelings some pastors will have for not being selected for the first groups.¹⁹ Ideally, both the pastor and lay leaders of the congregations selected will apply to be part of the experiment, providing a sense of ownership at both the pastoral and lay levels.

Another method to be used in acquiring the pastors and congregations for the cluster is to invite specific individuals and congregations to participate. An acute awareness of each congregational situation must exist within the heart and mind of the recruiter; some obvious congregations will not succeed in the consultation process and should not be invited to join the process.²⁰

Borden lists five action items a pastor should be doing to prepare their congregation for the change process prior to involving them in the cluster meeting:

1. Develop a prayer team that prays for vision, the community, and new disciples.
2. Develop a dream team that begins working on vision and strategy.
3. Develop a team of leaders who will help you lead change at the appropriate time.
4. Create an urgency calendar. Communicate urgency 52 Sundays a year.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 52.

5. Create a vision calendar. Cast vision 52 Sundays a year.²¹

Pastors not selected for the first cluster are told to begin implementing these five items to get their church ready for the second grouping of churches.

The pastor is the determining factor in creating an atmosphere for successful congregational turnarounds, not the congregation. His ability to lead or willingness to learn leadership behaviors is more important to the process than the congregation's willingness to embrace the changes needed to transition the church to a state of healthy growth and reproduction.²² A congregation that is resistant to change can be led to change if the right person is leading them. The wrong leader, on the other hand, can confuse and frustrate a congregation that is willing to make the necessary changes.²³

The first cluster group should include one or two pastors who have fairly healthy congregations, combined with pastors who can exercise leadership behavior well, even if they do not have the natural gift of leadership. Pastors who are completely failing in their ministries, who are on the last "leg" of their current ministry, should not be included in the first group. Men who are dealing with major character issues should also be excluded from the primary cluster. The pastors who have inherited the larger congregations, but who are not growing those churches, should not be included in this cluster; they will think they already have the answers and will be resistant to learning. Lastly, pastors

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 53.

²³ Ibid.

whose congregations are in constant conflict or are very small (10-30 people in attendance) should be included in later clusters, not this one.²⁴

The Covenant

The first meeting of the cluster will be spent drafting a covenant which will define what pastors can expect from each other and from the local association during the twelve months that the cluster meets. Pastors agree to attend all cluster meetings, arrive on time and stay for the entire time, do any required reading, participate in the entire strategy of consultation, recruit as many of their lay people as possible to attend the lay training events, submit congregational statistics each month to the associational office, and pray for one another.²⁵ The associational leaders promise to do whatever is necessary to support the pastors and congregations as they implement the strategy.²⁶

The Norfolk Area Baptist Association's first cluster of pastors agreed to the following covenant:

²⁴ Borden, *Assaulting*, 53-55.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

Covenant Commitment by Great Commission Breakthrough Cluster

Pastors	Norfolk Area Baptist Association
Pastors agree to attend all monthly Cluster Group meetings.	Financially and structurally support the Cluster Group meetings.
Pastors agree to fulfill all reading and ministry assignments.	Cover fees and expenses for cluster mentor and cluster trainers.
Pastors agree to pray for their Cluster Group partner each week.	Cover fees and expenses for consultants.
Pastors agree to report basic statistics to the NABA Resource Center each week.	Cover fees and expenses for Pastor Coaches, including Coach Training.
Pastors agree to submit to the Church Consultation process and lead their church to cover the internal expense related to the Church Consultation.	Provide books for required reading.
Pastors agree to encourage their congregations to attend Lay Training Events.	Provide handouts, outlines, and other teaching materials.
Pastors agree to honor their church's financial commitment to NABA through both monthly contributions and the annual Mission Impact Offering.	Furnish all meals.
Pastors agree to maintain confidentiality of all conversations held during the cluster meeting.	Financially support two large lay-training events (speaker's fees and expenses)
Pastors agree to hold one another accountable for goals set in the cluster meetings.	Outline and other teaching materials
	DVD and CD recordings of events ²⁷

²⁷ "Here's Hope Hampton Roads: Great Commission Breakthrough Cluster, 2009-2010", Norfolk Area Baptist Association.

The final copy of the covenant is given to the pastors at the second meeting and each pastor is asked to sign a common copy so all signatures are on a single copy of the covenant.²⁸

The Cluster Meeting

The cluster meets monthly, for four to five hours, to receive training in congregational health, leadership, and spiritual formation and is the primary source of training for the pastors. The first three hours are led by the cluster mentor, whose primary responsibility during this time is to train the participants in leadership and congregational health.²⁹ Interaction with the pastors over the assigned reading for the previous month is limited to these two key areas. The mentor should then conduct training in being or acting like a leader or understanding and implementing an area of congregational life that will facilitate health. The pastors should be encouraged to talk freely and openly about their congregational struggles and their frustrations in leading; the mentor should lead the pastors forward in finding solutions for specific areas of tension.³⁰

After their congregation has participated in the weekend consultation, the pastor should be given the time and opportunity to discuss the weekend process and how the church is reacting to the prescriptions given by the consultation team.³¹

²⁸ Borden, *Assaulting*, 57.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Borden, *Assaulting*, 57-58.

³¹ Ibid., 58.

The mentor should choose the curriculum to be read by evaluating the needs of the pastors in the cluster and the congregations they represent. Certainly, books on leadership and congregational health are to be included. The Norfolk cluster (2009-2010) was given these books to read:

Norfolk Cluster Books Read

September, 2009	<i>Effectiveness by the Numbers</i>
October, 2009	<i>I Refuse to Lead a Dying Church</i>
November, 2009	<i>Winning on Purpose</i>
December, 2009	<i>Pastorpreneur</i>
January, 2010	<i>Innovative Planning</i>
February, 2010	No book assignment given
March, 2010	<i>Outliers: The Story of Success</i>
April, 2010	<i>God-Size Your Church</i>
May, 2010	<i>Strengthsfinder 2.0</i>
June, 2010	<i>Five Dysfunctions of a Team</i> ³²

The mentor must remain flexible in his choice of books for the pastors; each church consultation will reveal specific issues in the life of that pastor and congregation,

³² *Great Commission Breakthrough Manual*, Norfolk Area Baptist Association, Fall, 2009.

which may require a shift in planned reading material for the group. Each pastor in the group brings a unique set of needs to the group which, once realized, may reveal a common weakness to be addressed by reading a book targeted to those needs.³³

The pastors should eat lunch together, followed by a time of group bonding through transparent prayer sessions. The period after lunch should focus on spiritual formation issues. Personal issues which have come to the surface can be dealt with by the mentor. Frankness and honesty are critical to the success of the cluster and should be instigated by the mentor's own transparency. Three questions should be asked of one pastor: how are you doing as a man? How are you doing as a man of God? How are you doing as a pastor? The mentor should be the first one to answer these questions before the group to set the example of personal vulnerability. After the second or third meeting, the openness of the group becomes a compelling reason for meeting.³⁴

These pastors will face great opposition to the changes they are leading in their congregations; some members will stand against them and Satan will assault them. The problems will be difficult to solve and their homes will come under attack. The time after lunch is crucial for providing the emotional, psychological, and spiritual strength they will need to succeed.³⁵

An associational representative should attend each cluster meeting to facilitate the event, handle the logistics of the meeting, and act as a liaison between the mentor, the

³³ Borden, *Assaulting*, 58.

³⁴ Paul Borden, *Great Commission Breakthrough Session Notes*, June 11, 2009.

³⁵ Borden, *Assaulting*, 59.

pastors, and the association. The coordination of schedules, consultations, and lay training events is the responsibility of the facilitator.³⁶

Once a pastor commits to being in the cluster, the congregation also makes a commitment to participate in the consultation process. A date is set for the weekend part of the consultation and the pastor is instructed on what is needed to prepare the congregation for a successful event. The consultation process involves two sections: the weekend consultation and the year-long process of coaching the congregation in implementing the prescriptions given to them during the initial weekend.³⁷

Accurate information is important for the consultant to write effective prescriptions, so a congregational self-study is used to obtain key information from the congregation about itself.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid., 59.

³⁷ Ibid., 69.

³⁸ Ibid., 70.

CHAPTER V

The Weekend Consultation

Each church and pastor is given the opportunity to commit to a weekend consultation with Dr. Borden or one of his associates. A thorough self-study by the congregation is necessary to assure the success of the consultation, followed by interviews with congregational leaders, a frank discussion among a cross-section of members, a training session on Saturday and the presentation of the prescriptions for change presented by the consultant on Sunday.

The Congregational Self-Study

The Congregational Self-Study is given to the congregation prior to the weekend consultation in order to provide the consultant with sufficient background information on the church to build a foundation for his recommendations. This study and report should be created by a group of staff and leaders. All material should be stored on computer with widely-used software, and printed out in a notebook. It is preferable to have the entire staff and board involved in compiling this information and discussing it.

History and Description

The congregation is asked to write a brief history of their church (maximum four pages). They are to include those events that contributed to periods of growth or decline in the number of people participating. It is to be written in a factual style. The temptation to “puff” the story for public relations to inject personal commentary

regarding past problems should be avoided. A list is to be provided of all full and part-time program staff positions for the last twenty years, or from the beginning if founded more recently. Schools and degrees for full-time program staff are to be included in the list. Dates for people's tenure are to be given and the real reason why individuals left should be expressed honestly.¹

A list is to be provided of all people who oversee specific areas of service, with the number of positions for which they are responsible in their oversight. Explanation is to be given whether these people are full-time, part-time, or volunteer staff. A list of all dates and descriptions for any building construction, major renovation, land acquisition, or leasing of facilities is to be included in the report. The leaders are to list the amount of acreage owned, leased, or rented, the square footage of building(s), and number of parking spaces (distinguishing between off-street and street parking).²

A written summary of the congregational structure including the individuals or groups who are responsible for program decisions, budgeting and financial oversight, buildings and grounds, and any other major interests of the congregation, is to be included. Committees, task forces, program teams, and all structural entities are to be listed and explanation is to be given as to how these relate to boards or councils. A chart reflecting the church's current organizational structure is to be given. All formal ties or major informal ties to other organizations or associations should be listed. The congregation's views and interactions with such groups is helpful.³

¹ *Congregational Self-Study*, Growing Healthy Churches, 2009, 1-4.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Demography

A chart and graph is to be included, for each of the following items, for every year over the last twenty years, or the church's entire history if founded more recently.

Church Historical Data

Number of members (if applicable) or regular participants (if no members exist)
Average attendance of your weekly worship services
Average weekly attendance of all your groups and classes combined
Number of persons transferring in to membership or regular participation
Number of persons transferring out of membership or regular participation
Number of baptisms
The average age of the people participating in the regular activities of the congregation is to be estimated with an explanation of how this was determined.
The percentage of people who attend the worship services who also attend some group meeting such as a class, support group, or service team is to be determined. Each individual is to be counted only once.
A list of the number of current members or regular participants who got involved:
Prior to 1960
From 1961-70
From 1971-80
From 1981-90
From 1991-2000
From 2000-present ⁴

⁴ Ibid.

The total receipts and expenditures for each of the last twenty years, or for the church's entire history if founded more recently, is to be sent with the report. Without listing names, the financial officers should list the amount given by each of the top ten contributors of record in the last fiscal year. These amounts are to be totaled, stating the percentage of giving this amount represents in relation to total contributions. The same information for the second ten contributors of record should be listed. The total number of contributors to the congregation during the last fiscal year is to be reported along with the average amount given per contributor during the last fiscal year.⁵

Community Study

A brief overview of the area and community in which the congregation is located or which the congregation serves is to be prepared. It should include about one paragraph on each of the following features: history, population, income levels, education levels, social, ethnic, and religious diversity, age distribution, growth/decline trends and other characteristics deemed significant. A brief description of the square mile that surrounds the primary location of the congregation should be prepared.⁶

Beliefs and Practices

The core values and/ or basic beliefs of the congregation should be listed, along with other important commitments or practices that characterize the congregation, such as

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

covenants or codes of conduct, key social issues, political positions, regular activities, significant financial commitments and ruling documents.⁷

A copy of this self-study should be sent, in typed form, one month prior to the weekend consultation. Copies of the following documents should be included:

Church Documents

Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws (or "Constitution")
Doctrinal statement
Last two annual reports
Last two annual budgets and financial statements
Sample bulletin and/or newsletter
Any policy statements
Other printed documents deemed helpful in providing insight into the congregation ⁸

After the self-study information has been compiled, the board and staff need to discuss the following questions as a group and complete an exercise pertaining to congregational conditions before printing the results in final form. The general consensus on each of these discussion questions should be included in the report.

- a. What are the three greatest strengths of this congregation, listed in priority order?
- b. What are the three most significant weaknesses of this church, listed in order of the greatest need first?

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

c. What three changes would you like to see made in the church, listed in priority order?

d. Do the leaders want this congregation to grow significantly?

e. Are the leaders willing to make the difficult decisions required for change and growth?

The board and staff are to complete the exercise on congregational conditions supplied by the consultant in order to determine where they perceive the congregation to be at this time.⁹

Exercise on Congregational Conditions

This exercise on congregational conditions is a simple survey. Respondents are to mark exactly two statements beneath each category which best describe the current conditions in the church.

Congregational Conditions

Commitment to Mission and Purpose	Involvement of Membership
Positive supportive attitude	Mutual dependency requires everyone to be involved, or leave
Uncertainty of future demands	All members willing to work
Visionary leader with high commitment level	High percentage of individuals' time and identity committed to the church
Strong sense of mission and purpose among every member	Volunteers easily found
High level of goal "ownership"	New members quickly find a place to

⁹ Ibid.

	become involved
High visibility and understanding of purpose and mission	High levels of enthusiasm among membership for participation
Common purpose throughout ministries of the church	Members assume there are enough others to do the job
Lowering of members' understanding of purpose	More paid staff to "enhance" ministries
New members do not sense church's purpose	Programs eliminated for lack of participation
Purpose is lost	Difficult to find volunteers ¹⁰

Congregational Conditions (2)

Programs, Structures and Organizations	Attitude Toward Change	Morale and Self-esteem
Minimal organization	Members are receptive	Morale is high
Spontaneity in decision making	Quickly accomplished	Self-esteem is in the process of being formulated
Functions of ministry determines form	Ownership is unanimous	Morale is higher
Structure created in response to needs	Changes easily adopted and integrated	Self-esteem easily affected by circumstances and short-term success /failure
Traditions begin to form	Suggested from all levels of membership	Morale is highest
New programs created to respond to new needs	New proposals are given serious consideration	Self-esteem is at its highest level
Delegation begins	Church leaders responsible for initiating and implementing	Confidence is contagious that goals can be reached

¹⁰ Ibid.

New roles and responsibilities created	Few changes proposed	Morale polarizes into groups of high and low
Few, if any, new programs added	Few changes considered that radically depart from status quo	Self-esteem develops uncertainties
Forms of ministries begin to determine function	“We’ve never done it that way before”	Few have high morale
Structure creates needs rather than responds to needs	Rationalizations often made for why it can’t be done	Frustration and/or despair by leaders in not knowing how to stop decline ¹¹
Programs deleted for lack of funds		Self-esteem lowers ¹²
Primary goals is preservation/survival		

The pastor is instructed to assign different parts of the study to those individuals who are responsible for that area of ministry. Information generated through the self-study process will give the leaders of the congregation an idea of the condition of the congregation, which will often clarify to the leaders why their congregation is in trouble. Gathering the information will also encourage the lay leaders to “buy into” the consultation process.¹³

The completed study document should be in the hands of the consultant one month prior to the weekend event, along with all materials the congregation has in print,

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Borden, *Assaulting*, 70.

such as bulletins, budgets, annual reports, brochures, and materials given to visitors. Borden recommends reading through the entire packet three times before creating a tentative list of the congregation's top five strengths, its top five concerns, and the five prescriptions the congregation will need to implement in order to begin a new life cycle and begin to grow.¹⁴

The Weekend: Interviews

After driving through the community surrounding the church and viewing the church facilities, the first two hours of interviews are conducted with the pastor, usually on Friday after lunch. His ability to lead systemic change, response to coaching, understanding of congregational life, commitment to the time and energy needed to turn the church around, political skills, successes, failures, personal risk factor, spiritual integrity and character, and family support are all weighed by the consultant during the interview.¹⁵

All support staff is then interviewed, each for less than thirty minutes. Competency, perceptions of both pastoral and lay leadership, and their evaluation of the congregation's strengths and weaknesses are considered during the interview process.¹⁶

The consultant then invites the pastor and his wife to dinner and asks the spouse about the pastor to see how they answer in the presence of their partner. Mutual support,

¹⁴ Ibid., 71-72.

¹⁵ Ibid., 73-74.

¹⁶ Ibid., 74.

commitment to the ministry, preparedness for difficulties, appropriateness of the amount of time spent with family, and any major family issues that need to be addressed are dealt with during the meal.¹⁷

Friday evening, following the dinner with the pastor and his wife, twenty to thirty people representing a cross-section of the congregation are assembled for a focus group session. The questions asked to the group are: what do you like best about this church (strengths)? If you could change one thing about this congregation, what would it be (weaknesses)? Where do you see this congregation five years from now? The answers are important, but it is equally vital to assess how the answers are given to determine the group's morale.¹⁸ The consultant then reassesses his strengths and weaknesses list and his recommended prescriptions for restoring the church to a healthy state.¹⁹

Saturday Training Session

The leaders of the congregation are asked to meet with the consultant and his team from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. on Saturday. The consultant teaches about a church's life cycle, helps the congregation determine where they are located on the life cycle chart, and explains what they will need to do to start a new life cycle.

George Bullard has identified ten distinct periods of a congregation's life cycle, tracking from birth to death. The categories do not fit perfectly in each congregation, but one category usually predominates and helps the church determine its place on the scale.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Borden, *Assaulting*, 75.

¹⁹ Ibid., 75.

According to Bullard, *Phase One: Early Growth* occurs in the first five to seven years of a church's life. Vision drives the young congregation forward during the birth years, followed by relationships, programs, and management. Relationships become equal in importance to the vision during the infancy stage. Programs begin to take precedence over relationships in the childhood stage as the church becomes more organized and stable.²⁰

At some point, the church moves into *Phase Two: Late Growth*; the vision, relationships, and programs are producing steady growth while management takes a "back seat." When management is moved into an equal status with the other three aspects of church life, the church is very near its peak. Bullard suggests this Phase covers years five through eighteen, based on his research.²¹

Phase Three: Prime/Plateau involves seven to nine years in the life of a congregation. When it is about a generation old – twenty-two to twenty-seven years of age – the congregation will move to the Plateau stage. The church has accomplished its original vision and pauses to take a breath after working hard for a generation. It takes its success and its vision for granted, assuming it will always be present and dominant.²²

Bullard lists five reasons why a congregation loses its sense of vision after a generation:

1. After a generation the congregation may have achieved its founding vision

²⁰ George Bullard, "*The Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development*." n.d. http://sed-efca.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/stages_of_church_life_bullard.pdf (accessed August 13, 2012), 3-6.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 7-12.

²² *Ibid.*, 12.

2. If it has not achieved its founding vision, the people may be weary of aiming for something they now see as unachievable; they allow the vision to drop from dominance.
3. The people who cast the founding vision have left the church through death, transition to other congregations, or disinterest; there are not enough carriers of the original vision to keep it alive.
4. The vision has become irrelevant to the context or situation so it has been cast aside.
5. New people have joined the congregation who do not understand the founding vision, so there is no longer a critical mass of people pursuing the vision.

The movement of the vision to a place of irrelevance moves the congregation to the Maturity stage and the downward spiral commences.²³ During the Maturity stage, the finances are strong, morale is high, attendance is strong, and no one seems to notice the lack of a compelling vision.²⁴

Phase Four: Early Aging, consists of two stages: Empty Nest and Retirement. This phase can last for an indefinite period of years. The congregation becomes overly concerned with holding on to past gains by giving more control and authority to its management systems. It moves from nostalgic to nasty about the loss of the past. They will look for someone to blame for the situation. Programs begin to disintegrate,

²³ Ibid., 12.

²⁴ Ibid., 13.

evangelism is sacrificed for personal growth, confidence in the pastor begins to diminish. Dysfunctional individuals rise to leadership and programs suffer accordingly.²⁵

The eighth stage of the church life cycle is the Retirement Stage. The members of the congregation have moved from anger to private despair over the ineffectiveness of their church. They will not invite friends to the services for fear of being embarrassed. A new pastor, with new ideas, is brought in to make necessary changes, but the long-time members will often resist the changes once they realize things will no longer be the way they used to be.²⁶ A congregation in the Retirement Stage is like a truck with four-wheel drive stuck in the mud to its axles; it cannot get out without help. The congregation gives up hope or runs out of resources needed to facilitate change.²⁷

Phase Five: Late Aging begins with the ninth stage of the church life cycle: Old Age. The people have given up hope, sometimes after a church split or after a lead pastor leaves because he gives up. The congregation is at rest; it has become a preaching station or chaplaincy ministry.²⁸ The church is now functioning on fumes rather than being fueled by a vision. The habit of gathering for worship is what keeps the congregation going.²⁹

²⁵ Ibid., 14-16.

²⁶ Ibid., 17.

²⁷ Ibid., 18.

²⁸ Ibid., 18.

²⁹ Ibid., 19.

The final stage on the church life cycle is Death.³⁰ This stage is not inevitable, but congregations who are aging, are dysfunctional, and who wait until Late Aging to seek a turnaround are unlikely to experience one.³¹

The GHC consultation process is primarily designed to assist those congregations which have been on the down side of their life cycle for a lengthy period of time.³² Highly dysfunctional congregations (those that have been on the downside of their life cycle for a long time) usually need time to prepare to create a new life cycle. This preparation time can take from one to five years. According to Borden, once it begins, the congregation probably has no more than two years to make the systemic changes required to start a new life cycle. It may take another three years to solidify the systemic changes that have been introduced. The preparation for change and the change process can be accelerated with outside help from either a denomination or the establishment of a mentoring relationship with either another congregation or consultant.³³

Congregations reaching the peak of their life cycle (adulthood) cannot stay there for more than three to five years without beginning to decline. These congregations need to create a new life cycle while they are at their peak.³⁴

Preparing a congregation for change involves creating a great sense of urgency while at the same time casting a compelling vision. Urgency is created to make the status quo unacceptable; the purpose of casting vision is to paint a preferable future.

³⁰ Ibid., 20-22.

³¹ Ibid., 22.

³² Borden, *Assaulting*, 65.

³³ Borden, *Session Notes*, 1-2.

³⁴ Ibid., 2.

These two concepts are the negative and positive foundation for fundamental change. Failure to cast vision while creating urgency makes it nearly impossible to prepare a highly dysfunctional congregation to be open to change.³⁵

Three groups need to be created by the pastor while he is creating urgency and casting vision. The first group is those who will pray for the congregation to become outward-focused and willing to take responsibility for changing a community. The second group is the initiators who will help plan the change process. The third group contains the leaders who will help the pastor lead the change when it comes. The pastor also works concurrently at developing a coalition of people who will be open to following the pastor's leadership when the change begins to happen.³⁶

Once these things are in place the congregation is ready to begin the change process to create a new life cycle for the congregation. It is at this juncture that it is best to enlist outside assistance to facilitate and accelerate the change process.³⁷

Bullard states that there are four key issues that determine a life cycle. Those issues are vision, relationships, ministry, and structure. When vision and relationships are driving a congregation's agenda, the church will be experiencing the upward side of the life cycle. However, when ministry and structure are controlling the agenda, the church will be on the downward side of the life cycle. When all four of these issues are at their peak, the congregation is at its peak in terms of the life cycle. Therefore, it is important to understand what is involved in each one of the four issues.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 2.

³⁷ Ibid.

1. **Vision:** There are three major elements that relate to Bullard's use of the term vision. Those three elements are *mission, vision, and values*.

Mission is the bottom-line reason why a congregation exists. The mission is either to minister primarily to those within the body, minister primarily to those not yet within the body, or to do both. If the last option is chosen, then the congregation must put those outside the body as the group that will receive priority status when it comes to the overall ministry of the congregation; this focuses the congregation outward. Congregations on a downward life cycle do not change their life cycle until they become focused outward.

Vision describes the results when the mission is successfully implemented. The vision must always be bigger than the congregation, describing how the congregation will change the community in which it exists. Vision produces passion for ministry. A compelling vision often motivates a congregation to make the changes needed to move from a downward life cycle to an upward one reflecting new health.

Values are the boundaries that guide the mission and form the parameters for the vision. All congregations have values; the question is whether the values reflect an outward or inward focus. New mission and vision initiatives are not accomplished without the adoption of new values consistent with those initiatives.

2. **Relationships:** People need the ability to develop relationships with other people; it is crucial for changing the life cycle of a congregation. They are not looking for friendly congregations; they are looking for a congregation where they can make friends.

If people cannot develop meaningful and sustained relationships quickly, they

will not remain or be attracted to congregations. Small congregations are only friendly to those who are already a part of the congregation. Large congregations grow large because people can make friends easily on their terms. There are at least five key concepts that are crucial to relationships as this term is used with regard to congregational life cycles:³⁸

- a. Connecting people with people so they can make friends.
- b. Creating third places so people can be accepted or valued as a person for who they are, not what they do.
- c. Learning the purpose of different size groups. Large groups meet for unity in order to worship together and accomplish a mission. Mid-size groups meet for fellowship and teaching. Small groups meet for intimacy and accountability.
- d. Understanding the difference between change and transition. People do not resist change, which is what occurs in organizations when they move from a downward life cycle to an upward one; they resist the loss of what was comfortable which provided status and influence, and made them feel significant. Understanding transitions enables change agents to identify that loss, develop plans to deal with the loss, and validate the grief that goes with the loss. Transition plans often enable change to occur with a minimum of resistance.
- e. Finding a congregation's "niche" in the community. Local congregations do not minister to all the variety of groups of people in the community; this is

³⁸ Borden, *Assaulting*, 101.

why God has placed a number of congregations in one community. His Body is comprised of numerous bodies to reach a variety of people. Each congregation must evaluate and understand the gift mix, talents, abilities, and backgrounds God has provided them to reach different kinds of people. It also means that each congregation must study the people groups God has prepared it to reach in order to maximize its effectiveness. Growing congregations think like missionaries. Healthy congregations are always removing cultural barriers and building cultural bridges to people in order to reach them.

3. **Ministries:** The purpose of ministry in a congregation is to help disciples mature and to aid disciples in the making of more disciples. Ministry must meet needs people have and contribute to the growth and health of individuals and the entire congregation. In missional congregations, ministry that does not grow must either be changed or eliminated. Two major questions constantly need to be asked of all ministries in a congregation: (1) How does this ministry contribute to an outward focused mission? Does it attract new unchurched people? Do the people leading this ministry understand its strategic significance and are they intentionally designing it to reach people? (2) Is this ministry growing? What is the strategy that underlies all of what we do with our ministry? Do our ministries reflect missionary thinking? Are we willing to start with people where they are to move them to where they should be? Are our ministries growing?

4. **Structure:** Structure (Management) is like a skeleton in a body. If the skeleton can be seen, then the body is in trouble, yet without a skeleton the body will collapse.

Skeletons grow and develop in healthy bodies so the body can grow.

For any congregational structure to be effective three major things must happen:

- a. The leader must be growing and developing as a leader while developing more leaders. The growth of any organization is in proportion to the leaders being developed within the organization. The pastor usually works with three groups in developing leaders; the staff, the board, and key people in the congregation. Without intentional leadership development, the congregation will not experience sustained healthy growth.
- b. Leadership intentionally reflects three terms that reflect how work gets done: responsibility, authority, and accountability. Responsibility means that there is agreement among the leaders on what the mission of the congregation is and who is charged with specific tasks to see that the mission is implemented. Authority means that there is agreement about where the boundaries lie that create freedom of movement to perform the tasks. Accountability means that there is agreement as to what will happen to whom when tasks are accomplished or not accomplished.³⁹

Numerical Church Growth Plateaus

The consultant takes time to explain the Church Numerical Growth Plateaus to the leaders during the Saturday session, delineating the differences between a small

³⁹ Borden, *Session Notes*, 2-6.

church, a large church, and a very large church.

The Small Church Phase contains two growth plateaus: 24-45 attenders and 75-110 attenders. Level One has a willing leader, a cohesive group of willing followers, no intolerable pressures, and no overwhelming competition for role assignments. Level Two has an attractive leader with outreach gifts, marginal quality of congregation, facilities, programs, and preaching. It is marked with middle-sized group dynamics and an unlimited homogeneous unit of prospects which match the demographics of the congregation. The members use their own outreach skills to grow the congregation.

The Large Church Phase also contains two numerical growth plateaus: 150-225 and 400-450. The Level Three Plateau, consisting of 150-225 attenders, is indicated by a warm, team-leader pastor, attendees are able to connect with new people, large group dynamics are at work, there is an outreach-oriented value system in place and a clear, focused purpose drives the church. The facilities, programs and preaching are average or better than average and there are a proper number and diversity of open groups.

The Level Four Plateau, 400-450 attenders, can only be reached when the pastor understands the need to retrain the leaders of the congregation. The staff has managerial strengths and there is a proper staff to people ratio. This size congregation has begun to adopt the “large church” mindset. They have an applied, focused purpose. Their facilities, programming and preaching are above average to good. The church’s infrastructure has been developed into a workable group. They are instigating new ministries to new age groups being attracted to their congregation. Over fifty percent of

the congregation has been mobilized.

The Very Large Church Phase also contains two plateaus which must be overcome in order to achieve growth. The Level Five Plateau, 700-750 in attendance, is managed by middle-management level staff who are effective in their proper roles. They have effective lay leader training programs in place and have applied the multiple-congregation concept. The facilities, programming and preaching have reached the level of excellence and there is a moderate vertical diversification of open groups.

The Level Six Plateau, 1000-1200 members, contains visionary leadership, delegated management, an expanding leader base, exceptional quality, and a multiplication of churches as a result of their ministry.⁴⁰

Borden points out different developmental phases require different activities; in other words, the church must change what it is doing in order to get where it is going. The elements beneath the current plateau are what is holding that level up. In order to grow beyond the plateau to the next level, the elements above the current level are barriers to growth.⁴¹

How a Large Church Thinks and Acts

Another teaching strategy incorporated by Borden and his consultants during the Saturday session is to show a small to medium size congregation how a large church thinks and acts:

⁴⁰ Ibid., 6-7

⁴¹ Ibid., 6-7.

1. Staff led. The ministries of a congregation are led well in order to transform consumers into fully committed disciples of Jesus Christ. Every ministry led by staff is expected to grow. Excellent staff members have gifts and talents that enable them to lead, communicate, and relate well to people.

2. Fellowship and Shepherding must be programmed; people must be cared for as they participate in ministry.

3. Intentional Assimilation of visitors. The goal of assimilation is mobilization.

4. Church vision continually kept before the people. Vision is the emotional fuel that motivates people. The leader must communicate vision every time the leader communicates with individuals or groups.

5. Communication is maintained to the level of redundancy. Mission, vision, values, structure, and strategies must constantly be communicated.

6. The senior pastor leads the staff, board, and congregation. The concept of spiritual leadership must be recaptured by the small congregation.

7. The board affirms rather than granting permission. The board spends far more time on considering the future than dealing with the issues of the present.

8. There are changed expectations of how ministry is done. The congregation does not exist primarily for the people already there; it exists for those yet to attend.

9. The congregation is honeycombed with third places; people need places to make friends.

10. Mission and vision is placed above self-interest. Every congregational

behavior is evaluated in light of the mission and vision. If it does not support the mission and vision of the congregation, it is either changed or discarded.⁴²

Verbal and open discussion about the leaders' expectations of the weekend is included. The consultant spends most of the time describing a healthy congregation and contrasting it to an unhealthy congregation. Specific mention is made of areas of unhealthiness in the congregation's current life. The prescriptions to be given to the congregation on Sunday are laid out and areas of friction are addressed.⁴³

The Report

Following the training session with the leaders, the consultant and his team meet to discuss their observations and write the report to the congregation by focusing on the five strengths of the congregation, five concerns which need to be addressed, and five specific prescriptions which specifically and directly deal with the concerns. Each prescription contains action items with deadlines for implementation. The finished report is two to four pages in length and is emailed to the pastor so he can have time to evaluate and absorb the prescriptions.⁴⁴

The NABA consultation team, under the direction of Dr. Borden, presented the following prescriptions to one of the congregations in the Association who had agreed to a weekend consultation:

⁴² Ibid., 9.

⁴³ Borden, *Assaulting*, 75-76.

⁴⁴ Borden, *Assaulting*, 179.

_____ BAPTIST CHURCH
CONSULTATION REPORT

“We want to thank the Pastor, Deacons, Staff, Consultation Team, Pastor Support Team, Elders and people of the church for working with us to produce this report.

_____ Baptist Church has a great history and God is currently at work in this church. We believe you can experience even greater and more effective ministry in the future. This consultation, report, and year of coaching to follow the adoption of these recommendations will lead this congregation to even greater effectiveness and growth in the next few years.

STRENGTHS OF _____ BAPTIST CHURCH:

1. Pastor and wife - As we conducted the interviews we heard over and over again a deep appreciation for the pastor and his wife. Many commented on the pastor’s giftedness in seeing a vision and casting that vision while inviting the congregation on a journey into the future. Much appreciation was expressed for the pastor’s untiring efforts to love and lead the church.
2. Property. The church property is in a great location and is debt free. The school and traffic in and out of the school give the church great visibility. The residents of the apartment communities and the young people gathering in the parking lot also give the church a natural opportunity to connect with nearby residents that are not here yet.

3. There is an openness to a diversity of people and a growing diversity of racial and age mix with genuine willingness on the part of the people of the church to become more effective in reaching the lost people around the church.
4. The Youth Ministry – There is excitement and appreciation for the healthy, loving youth ministry.
5. There is an openness to follow the Pastor. He is casting a vision that the congregation can understand and follow. He is passionate about reaching the community.
6. The church is debt free and has money in the bank. The church also has adequate land and parking. God has blessed this church with an excellent location for growth.

CONCERNS FOR _____ BAPTIST CHURCH:

1. Evangelism. There is little effective evangelism taking place. Visitor flow is low and retention of visitors is also low. There is a need for passion for reaching the lost.
2. Assimilation. Very few of the people who visit the church every week are being folded into the church. Improving the assimilation of guests will accelerate church growth.
3. Leadership Development. There is a core group of leaders with multiple roles and responsibilities. The church must develop new leaders to support a growing congregation and to replace an aging leadership core.

4. Administrative/Organizational Needs. The current structure does not and should not match the by-laws. The structure needs to resemble a growing healthy church model. There is a need for role clarity.
5. Dated facility and décor. The church facility and décor should be welcoming and inviting to new people as they enter. The facilities should be seen as through the eyes of a first-time guest.
6. Low Financial Base. The cash flow difficulty has forced the church to draw down their assets from savings.

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR _____ BAPTIST CHURCH:

“Building for the Next Generation”

1. Evangelism. There is some commitment to effective outreach among the people of the church. We recommend that the church adopt an official statement that, from this point on, “evangelism is Job One” for _____ Baptist Church. This is to be effectively communicated throughout the church and to new members on a regular and consistent basis. By adopting these prescriptions the church will be deciding to make evangelism the first priority for its efforts.

The church should identify families as the segment of the population that it will be most effective in reaching and begin to develop effective “first dates, second dates, and third dates” to reach that population. Careful planning must be done to ensure that at all first date events attractive invitations are issued to follow up events (2nd dates). Some of these first date attendees should end up becoming engaged to become the bride of Christ. A strategy of a target population and of at

least two “first dates” for that target population should be in place no later than February 29, 2012. The initial first date event is to be completed no later than April 30, 2012. A strategy must be in place so that effective invitations to second dates are given at the first date activities. At least three of these “first dates” or “bridge events” shall be conducted in 2012.

A church wide study of *Reimagining Evangelism* will be conducted by August 31, 2012. This study will help church members see a variety of creative ways to reach out evangelistically to those around them.

An assimilation team will be formed to include the Pastor, Pastor Support Team, and Elders. A study of Nelson Searcy’s *Fusion* material should be conducted and a plan of assimilation should be functional by no later than December 1, 2012.

A Ministry Audit should be conducted no later than October 31, 2012. In a Ministry Audit each ministry within the church must show their strategies for reaching un-churched people. If they cannot show how they will reach lost people, the leadership of this ministry needs to be changed or the ministry should be terminated. Each year each ministry must show evidence that it is actually reaching un-churched people.

The question is asked of every aspect of the church: is this aspect helping us to reach lost people or hindering us from reaching lost people? A study team will be formed by January 31, 2012 to research the possible need for a name change. A recommendation will be brought to the church for vote by June 1, 2012.

2. Leadership Development. There is a great need to train new leadership for the church. The church will adopt the staff-led, accountable model of leadership recommended in John Kaiser's book *Winning on Purpose* by May 31, 2012.

The church will develop a program of apprenticeships throughout all the ministries of the church. Each person doing ministry should be training another person to do the same ministry. This will be in place by December 31, 2012.

The church will create new units to facilitate growth. These may be new small groups, affinity groups, or new Sunday School classes. New units can and should be created at any time. A system to create new units by identifying and training new leaders will be in place by February 28, 2013.

A Sabbath week will be planned for the first week of January 2012. A Worship service will be enjoyed on December 31, 2011. No church service or meeting will be held at _____ until Sunday, January 8, 2012.

Individuals are free to worship with another congregation that week, but we are recommending a week of rest in the Lord with prayer and possibly fasting. This will mark a change from the old to the new. The fresh start is a fresh beginning as we "Build for a New Generation."

3. Administrative and Organizational Needs. An annual plan that includes these prescriptions (including bridge events, second and third dates, as well as normal church functions) with SMART goals should be developed by March 31, 2012. A comprehensive, consistent communication plan (including e-mail, Facebook, postcards, letters, bulletin inserts, fliers, etc.) will be implemented by February 1, 2012. The organizational structure will be developed according to the

implementation of the structure described in *Winning on Purpose*, mentioned in the previous prescription.

4. Dated Facility and Decor. The church needs a clean sweep of each room and passageway in order to remove unused, broken, and outdated items. This will be done in order to remove barriers and distractions for first-time guests. Cleaning will also be done on a regular basis. Every room, including the sanctuary, should be evaluated to provide a fresher, more contemporary environment conducive to those in the target population. Recommended changes in the sanctuary include:
 - Removal of modesty rail to open the platform
 - Reposition screen to make it more useful
 - Remove plaques from the wall.
 - Remove the candle holders from the sanctuary and hallway
 - Remove dated artificial floral arrangement
 - Remove unneeded furniture
 - Memorial plaques in hallway
5. Low Financial Base. A stewardship emphasis will be initiated by Feb. 29, 2012. A study of either Crown Financial or Financial Peace University will be initiated by September 30, 2012.

A church meeting will be held on Sunday, December 4, 2011 to vote to either embrace or reject this report as a whole. If it is adopted, it will immediately begin to be implemented with the help of the congregational coach who will be provided to help with this implementation process.

Conclusion: It is our prayer that the people of _____ Baptist Church will not only embrace this report but also seek to fulfill the prescriptions with spiritual vigor. If such is done we are convinced _____'s best days are still in the future. We believe the Lord wants this congregation to be healthy and growing in order to bring honor to His name and see many more people in this community become disciples of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁵

The consultant preaches to the congregation Sunday morning with the purpose in mind of generating urgency, casting vision, and preparing the congregation for the report.⁴⁶ Lunch is served after the morning worship time and the consultant spends about ninety minutes with the congregation reviewing the report and answering questions; every person is given a copy of the report. His purpose is to attempt to persuade them to adopt the report when the final vote is taken in a few weeks.⁴⁷

The congregation will hold at least two “town hall” type meetings after the consultation weekend to discuss the prescriptions before the vote. All five prescriptions must be voted “up” or “down”; there is to be no picking and choosing between the prescriptions. The danger of allowing the group to choose from among the prescriptions is the tendency to choose the easy prescriptions and avoid the ones which require sacrifice and change.

Once the congregation agrees to implement the full report, the associational director assigns a congregational coach to come alongside them for a minimum of one

⁴⁵ Norfolk Area Baptist Association Resource, used by permission.

⁴⁶ Borden, *Assaulting*, 179.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 180.

year to help them execute the prescriptions.⁴⁸ The coach will be on the campus of the congregation at least once a month for twelve months to conduct training and, if necessary, confront leaders who are standing in the way of progress. The coach also holds the pastor and leaders accountable for instigating the five prescriptions.⁴⁹

The weekend consultation creates a sense of momentum in a congregation which must be maintained by scoring some early victories and successes in the first few months following the prescriptions vote. If too much time is allowed to lapse without a noticeable victory, the momentum will be lost and virtually impossible to regain.⁵⁰

Situational Coaches

A coach is a person with skills, experience, and insight, who assists the one being coached to more clearly define the issues they face, identifies solutions for those challenges, and guides in planning a strategically sound path to implementing the solutions.⁵¹ In the GHC process, much of the coaching is done by the cluster mentor through “situational coaching,”⁵² which is short-term, focused attention given to helping a pastor or congregation face a specific challenge or opportunity. Situational coaching can last between four and twelve sessions.⁵³

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 180.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 128.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

Effective situational coaches are usually pastors who have had to think their way through tough situations and can transfer thinking and ministry skills developed in the rough and raw context of ministry.⁵⁴

The initial coaching session is spent clarifying the issues and needs; the coach decides if he is capable of providing the help needed by the pastor or congregation. The coach assesses the issues and determines if the obvious needs are the real problem or if they are symptomatic of deeper issues which will need to be addressed. Once the foundational issues have been revealed, one or two assignments are given by the coach, additional data is requested, and the pastor is asked to begin to develop the resources needed to deal with the problem.⁵⁵ Several solutions are considered during the next few sessions and a plan of action is created. Specific steps are given which should lead to a resolution of the problem.⁵⁶

The pastor is given specific actions to take and is held accountable for those actions by the coach. Changes in the plan or in how the pastor is implementing the actions are discussed in a reporting and debriefing process so both men are clear about what is happening and what is not happening. Adjustments are made throughout the resolution process until the problem is resolved, at which time the coach releases the pastor from the coaching process.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ibid., 129.

⁵⁵ Borden, *Assaulting*, 129.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 130.

Borden's team has found that a one-year coaching relationship is the minimal amount of time for a pastor to learn how to resolve problems and find solutions under the guidance and help of a trained coach. The best coaches are pastors who have led dying or declining congregations through the steps to revitalization; they realize how challenging it is to maintain the momentum generated by the weekend consultation.⁵⁸

Congregational Coaches

The congregational coach differs from the situational coach by working with the leadership team of the congregation rather than just the pastor. The congregational coach works with the congregation for one year after the church has accepted the prescriptions given to the congregation as a result of the weekend consultation.⁵⁹

This individual must possess effective transformation experience in growing churches and be experienced with more than one congregation. He must have led congregations larger than the ones he is coaching and it is important that he has had experience being coached or mentored. His relationship with his peers must be healthy and he must have a good understanding of congregational systems. He must also possess a confident humility that gives him the ability to confront and stand strong in the face of opposition. The ability to teach and communicate what he has learned and not be threatened by resistance and rejection is also a critical characteristic of the congregational

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 131.

coach.⁶⁰ While it is nearly impossible to find someone who fits all of these characteristics, there are leaders who exemplify most of these important qualities.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 131-132.

CHAPTER VI

Lay Training Events

The pastors' cluster and the consultation weekend are the first two pieces of the GHC process for church revitalization; the third piece is to conduct two lay training events within twelve months of the beginning of the cluster. The pastors involved in the cluster are expected to do everything in their power to get as many lay people in their congregations to attend these two meetings. The training received in these meetings will help the pastor lead the church through change.¹

The First Lay Training Event

The events are scheduled for a Friday evening and Saturday morning or a Saturday session that runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Borden covers two key areas during the first training event: congregational health and disease. He teaches them what it takes for a church to become healthy. He re-teaches the material presented to the leaders during the Saturday session of the weekend consultation, preferring to use a layered learning strategy; coming back to the same basic material after some time has elapsed from its introduction.²

Borden begins the first session by sharing three basic assumptions about church health: first, creation shows that everything that is healthy grows. Babies are watched

¹ Borden, *Assaulting*, 98.

² Ibid.

carefully by physicians and parents to make certain they are adding weight and growing in length. If a baby does not grow within a normal range of measurement something is vitally and fundamentally wrong; examinations and tests are mandated to determine the growth inhibitor.³

The Scriptures declare the church of Jesus Christ to be a living organism⁴ and is therefore expected to experience growth. Congregations locked into a period of non-growth or decline are unhealthy and sick. Borden describes the unhealthy congregation by writing, “there is more disease in the body than there is health.”⁵

His second assumption is based on Matthew 16:18 where Jesus states emphatically that His church will prevail against the forces of the evil one, Satan. “The church of Jesus Christ was designed to depopulate the Evil One’s zip code by constantly making new disciples.”⁶ Congregations who do anything less than this are being disobedient to the Lord of the church.

Borden’s third assumption involves taking the unchangeable message of the cross to a constantly changing culture. Smaller congregations of two hundred or less attenders are small because they are designed to be small. Larger congregations are large because they are designed to be large. Smaller congregations can become larger congregations by acting like larger congregations while they are still small; they must act the way they want to become.⁷

³ Ibid., 99.

⁴ Ephesians 1:22, 23; 5:25; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

⁵ Borden, *Assaulting*, 100.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

If these three assumptions are true then the church of Jesus Christ is a living, reproducing, constantly morphing missional entity that has one goal: the continual making of new disciples. The problem identified by Borden is that the church of Jesus Christ in the United States has become an inflexible organization catering to consumer Christians at the expense of making disciples.⁸

The answer to the problem facing American churches is to force troubled congregations to make two fundamental choices:

1). Choose to be a missional entity or an organization with a mission statement. In the end, this is really a choice between obedience to Christ or sin.

2). Choose to implement your decision to be missional or continue business as usual. This is a choice between becoming obedient or remaining disobedient.⁹

Choosing to implement obedience to Christ involves some key assumptions behind the strategy presented by the GHC process:

- Most pastors cannot lead a congregation to make the right choices alone.
- Most congregations cannot make the right choices without outside help.
- Making the right choices involves truth-telling and the offer of hope.
- The right choice will not occur without pain (usually significant pain).
- Without accountability, nothing happens.
- People must be attracted to accountability.
- Learning occurs as it happens repeatedly at different levels.¹⁰

⁸ Borden, *Leading Today's Church*, PowerPoint Slide.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The first lay training event becomes an opportunity for the consultant to revisit the Congregational Life Cycle. Most congregations are on the downward side of the cycle and need help in knowing how to create a new life cycle in order to be healthy again and grow. Four key concepts are taught which, if aligned correctly, enable a congregation to start a new life cycle and move to the upward side of the cycle.¹¹ Those key concepts are vision, relationships, ministries, and structure.

Vision involves determining the mission of the church and understanding the power of a driving vision. Every congregation has a mission; that mission may have degenerated into one that merely meets the needs of those who are presently attending the church or it reflects the mission Jesus Christ gave to the church, which is to make new disciples regularly and consistently.¹² Since systemic change is required to move from a downward cycle to an upward cycle, every ministry in the congregation must prove how they are actually helping make new disciples. Changing the mission from an inward focus to an outward focus is the single most important change a congregation can make in moving to a new life cycle.¹³

Closely tied to the mission of the church is its vision. The vision paints a preferred future and is often difficult to determine. Borden's strategy in helping find the vision for each church is to help them describe what their community will look like when they are making new disciples and leading them to decide on a numeric goal to force accountable, measurable progress toward the vision.¹⁴ First, he asks them to describe the

¹¹ Borden, *Assaulting*, 101.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 102.

geographical community the church believes God is calling them to reach. An agreed upon number of unreached people (people who do not attend any congregation on a regular basis) is determined, followed by a percentage of that number the leaders of the congregation believe God will help them lead to become disciples of Christ in the next five years. One to ten percent of the community is a reasonable, reachable goal.¹⁵

The goals are not centered upon the size of the congregation (an inward goal) but rather the impact the congregation will have on its community as it fulfills its vision. With the vision in place, strategies to achieve the goal can begin to be developed.¹⁶

The second key concept to be taught during this segment of the first lay training event is titled, “relationships.” Borden, or the consultant, reminds the congregational leaders that people are not looking for a friendly church; they are looking for friends. Building friendships in many smaller congregations is nearly impossible for two reasons: building new friendships is not an idea people in smaller congregations understand because, second, members of these congregations have all the friends they can handle.¹⁷

Using a Lego block as an illustration, Borden explains that people are like Legos; they only have so many pegs to connect with other people. They can only have a limited number of meaningful relationships, which is why new people must constantly and intentionally find connections with people who are relatively new to the congregation. If the number of new people is limited, someone in the established group must be willing to loosen their connection with their friends for a while so they

¹⁵ Ibid., 102.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 103.

can start connecting with new people. When the congregation increases its visitor flow, this person networks the newer people with each other and encourages them to find friends among themselves.¹⁸

Discussion is then held explaining how people are not only looking for friends but a place where they can be accepted for who they are, not what they do. Small groups provide this place for them to find significance and acceptance. Small group creation is taught at a basic level with an emphasis on its value for growing the congregation by multiplying the number of groups in the church.¹⁹

Borden continues the discussion by explaining the purpose of large groups and their role in the Sunday worship service. One of the crippling effects of making fellowship and connection the main purpose for Sunday morning gatherings is it focuses the church's combined energy on something that is not part of their mission and vision. Because fellowship and connecting are not happening anywhere else other than on Sunday morning, people look to that time frame to make their connections.²⁰ It is imperative to provide means and times for connecting outside of the Sunday morning time frame so the mission and vision becomes the reason for Sunday gatherings.

A final segment is covered by the consultant that leads the congregation to evaluate their niche in the community. Because they have a unique set of gifts, passions and talents, God has designed them to reach a portion of the community that fits those skills.²¹

¹⁸ Ibid., 103.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 104.

The third key concept taught during this lay event is in regard to ministries. Borden wants the congregations to understand what it means to become staff-led. A staff member may or may not be a paid individual; they are people who have combined responsibility, authority, and accountability in their position of leadership. Missional congregations accomplish their mission by staffing for those ministries people expect to see when they enter a congregation. The goal in mind is to move people from where they are to where they should be; from consumers to fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Non-missional congregations start staffing with where the congregants expect them to be, not with where the people really are in their spiritual journey.²²

The congregation must give these staff members the authority to conduct these ministries any way they see fit, but must also hold the staff members and leaders accountable for measurable goals once a year. If goals are met, the staff members are allowed to keep their position; if goals are not met, they are asked to step down from their areas of ministry.²³ Borden explains to the lay leaders that you can hold individuals accountable, but you cannot hold committees accountable.²⁴

Each staff member must set the same three goals, beyond the normal goals which are set for their areas of ministry: the number of new disciples that will come to Jesus through their ministry, the number of new leaders they will develop, and the percentage by which their area of ministry will grow during the coming year. Totaling all of these goals gives the pastor his goals for the year since the staff members work for the pastor.²⁵

²² Borden, *Assaulting*, 104.

²³ *Ibid.*, 105.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

The structure segment covers three major issues. First, the leader/pastor must be growing and developing personally as a leader while at the same time developing new leaders within the congregation. As groups and leaders are multiplied in a congregation, it will grow.²⁶

The second issue stressed insists that responsibility, authority, and accountability are to be “married.”²⁷ The pastor is given the responsibility and authority to lead the church however he deems necessary to meet the agreed upon goals, but is also held accountable for meeting those goals. The pastor holds staff members accountable while giving them the responsibility and accountability for growing their ministries.²⁸

The third major issue requires the pastor and staff to turn the ministry back over to the laity by “equipping the saints for the work of the ministry.”^{29 30} The laity, in turn, must give the leadership of the congregation back to the pastor. The pastor must eliminate “pastoral care” from his work schedule because it is an unbiblical term and insist the congregation practice “congregational care” which is a biblical concept.³¹

The Second Lay Training Event

The Second Lay Training Event is focused on making the Great Commission the

²⁶ Ibid., 105.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ephesians 4:12

³¹ Borden, *Assaulting*, 106.

value of the congregation. If making new disciples is the purpose of the church, then fulfilling the Great Commission must become the primary value that drives the congregation in its decisions and actions. The resources of the church must be aligned to accomplish this mission. This training event teaches congregations how to align their resources to fulfill the Great Commission.³²

The day of training is divided into two sections: what the church actually believes about the Great Commission and the development of an overall congregational strategy for practicing the behavior of making disciples.³³

God has created all things to bring glory to Himself. The church of Jesus Christ brings glory to God when it accomplishes its purpose. Knowing and believing the purpose of the church becomes critical in how a church makes decisions and adds or eliminates ministries.³⁴ The purpose of the church is to make new disciples for Jesus Christ. When any church moves away from this mission, it loses its ability to bring glory to God.

According to Borden, most people in most churches think the congregation exists to meet their needs and the needs of their family. They have forgotten that the church desires to meet their spiritual needs so they can be prepared to meet the needs of those who are outside of Christ and outside of the church. “We feed armies so they can fight, not so they can have a fine dining experience.”³⁵

Pastors must realize that they must be unrelenting in their efforts to keep their

³² Ibid., 107.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 109.

congregations focused outward. Because of the tendency of Christians to move back to being inwardly focused, the decision to be outward focused must be revisited every three to four years to maintain its viability.³⁶

Borden then discusses the four mission fields each congregation has to reach. First, the church must reach those who attend the services each week who are not yet disciples of Christ. This is the easiest of the four fields to reach, and it is the least expensive to reach. The solution offered for this group of people is to include gospel presentations in the assimilation and new member orientation process.³⁷

The second mission field includes those who live in the community who are similar to the people in the congregation but do not yet attend church and are not disciples. Bridge events, friendship evangelism, special Sundays, and events are discussed with the group.³⁸

A third mission field is those who live in the community who are not like the people in the congregation and do not attend any church. This involves people who exist in different social strata than the congregational members and more than likely will not result in their attending the church. The purpose of reaching this mission field is to build the kingdom of God, not the local church.³⁹

The fourth field is the people in the nation and around the world who are not yet disciples of Jesus Christ.⁴⁰ Short-term missions teams are encouraged to do their mission

³⁶ Ibid., 109.

³⁷ Ibid., 113-114.

³⁸ Ibid., 114.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 113.

work with those in cultures who do not have the resources of the local American congregation.⁴¹

Conclusion

The Growing Healthy Churches process developed by Dr. Borden and his associates has produced significant growth among the local churches that have gone through the entire process of pastors' clusters, weekend consultations and lay training events. Southern Baptist churches can benefit from the application of the principles and practices Borden promotes throughout the process.

The pastors' cluster generates the first sense of expectation that changing the status quo is possible. Hopelessness, combined with lethargy and disobedience, pervades the congregation that is in the process of dying. The GHC process has been the catalyst for hundreds of congregations experiencing revitalization; that fact alone provides hope in the midst of despair. When pastors are exposed to the statistics represented in Borden's materials, hope is birthed in their hearts and minds. Finding the cluster to be a confidential place of encouragement and inspiration feeds the flame of hope to a brighter level.

The pastoral leadership training provided by the cluster mentor and associational director, combined with exposure to new and dynamic reading materials through the assigned books, gives the pastors the tools they need to begin making decisions that will lead to better congregational health. The intimate and challenging personal prayer time with other pastors, based on transparency and honesty, meets a deep need of every pastor

⁴¹ Ibid., 115.

in the cluster. The accountability segment of the cluster, in which each pastor is held accountable to the group for actions and results, provides the motivation needed to work intentionally and intelligently to find ways to increase the results of each man's ministry.

The pastors will experience personal change through the monthly meetings; it is inevitable. Their knowledge and expertise grows as they learn good leadership behaviors from those in the group who have experienced successes and failures in ministry.

The reading materials and books provided to the pastors must be chosen deliberately and with their mission in mind or they will lose interest and not read their assignments, leading to a shallow and meaningless discussion of the book's contents during the cluster meeting. The mixture of personalities and capabilities must be carefully weighed when choosing pastors to be part of a cluster. Overly talkative pastors can dominate the discussion and become offended when asked to allow the other pastors to have input. Pastors who struggle with unusually high ministerial jealousy should not be included in a group that has successful pastors in its membership. Each pastor must strive to remain teachable and non-resistant to new ideas.

The weekend consultation provides the best venue for discerning what is wrong in a congregation and what needs to be done to make it right. While the pre-consultation report can provide historical, structural and denominational background for the consultant's consideration, the weekend interviews give him a current assessment of the situation. The right questions, asked of the right people, identify a trend of belief and practice that lends itself to correction. "If you could change one thing about your church, and money were no object, what would it be?" That question forces the interviewee to be honest with the consultant about the church's weaknesses. Absolute confidentiality must

be expressed to the interviewees in order to obtain the best answer. The people know their weakness is in the area of growth and evangelism and will give this response, or they will refer to the financial needs of the congregation.

Typically, congregations consider themselves to be “warm and friendly, family-oriented;” that is the response given by most people when asked, “What is the greatest strength of your church?” Obviously that characteristic is not the solution to growing healthy churches, since these dying churches consider it to be their greatest strength. The key strategy used by the consultant on Saturday is to explain this to the leadership of the congregation and then teach them the characteristics of a growing, healthy congregation.

The weakness of the weekend consultation is in the prescriptions and the timeline projected by the consultant. Each congregation must be made to feel that their prescription is unique to their situation and adequate time must be allowed for the trial and error process of implementing the prescriptions. If one of the prescriptions does not work in a congregation, the congregational coach must be allowed the freedom to suggest a different prescription with the same outcome in mind.

Dr. Borden’s personality offended some of the congregational leaders and pastors in the Norfolk association. He wrote prescriptions that were absolute and non-negotiable, which seemed an irrational stance to the experienced leaders in the group. A firm, yet flexible approach would better suit Southern Baptist churches.

No approach to prayer was suggested by the GHC leadership. Relying on the process alone is a mistake; the church is to be a supernaturally-led organism and intercessory prayer is the key that unlocks the door to God’s incredible favor. Intercessory prayer groups need to be established and engaged weeks before a weekend

consultation occurs. The intercessors should be praying for their pastors who are involved in the cluster. Massive amounts of prayer work must be done prior to voting on the prescriptions, and intercession must be maintained throughout the change process.

Another weakness evidenced in the Norfolk churches is the immense reading assignments given to members of the congregation. Complaints were registered by pastors from their congregants of being forced to read books that were written for professional church growth experts. This is a legitimate concern and should be addressed by limiting the books required to be read to one or two with the remainder of the material being taught to the congregation by the pastor or the congregational coach.

The lay training events provide a platform for re-tooling the mental and spiritual philosophies of the leaders in the congregations who have voted to do the prescriptions. Materials on how to lead churches through change should be included in the training events, with greater emphasis placed on the practical as opposed to the theoretical and philosophical side of the process.

The success of the GHC process is a matter of record among congregations in the United States and Australia. The research performed for this project supports Dr. Borden's claim that 50% of the churches that vote to follow his prescriptions experience growth and improved health. While that percentage is not as high as one might hope, it is still a significant number and deserves attention by associational leaders among the Southern Baptist movement.

The pastor and people who will get involved in the GHC process and follow the principles and guidelines promoted by Dr. Borden will experience change and growth they would not experience otherwise. It is the recommendation of this author, based on

the observations and research employed in the pages of this project, that Southern Baptists across the nation engage Dr. Borden and his Growing Healthy Churches program to revitalize their churches and, consequently, their denomination.

APPENDIX A

Survey Questions

1. Did you participate in the pastors' cluster?

- Yes
- No

2. How would you rate the effectiveness of the pastors' cluster in providing you with new leadership skills? Please rank its effectiveness on a scale of 1-10, 1 being completely ineffective, 10 being extremely effective

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

3. What was the greatest benefit of the pastors' cluster? You may choose more than one answer.

- Books read
- Devotionals
- Discussion
- Prayer time

4. Did you and your congregation agree to, and participate in, the weekend consultation?

- Yes
- No

5. How would you rate the effectiveness of the weekend consultation? Please rank its effectiveness on a scale of 1-10, 1 being completely ineffective, 10 being extremely effective.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

6. Which part of the consultation do you consider to be the greatest benefit to the congregation? You may choose more than one answer.

- The leadership interviews
- The prescriptions
- The consultant's explanation of the prescriptions and presentation to the congregation
- Other (please specify)

7. Did your congregation hold "town hall" discussions after the consultation?

- Yes
- No

8. Did your congregation vote to incorporate the prescriptions?

- Yes
- No

9. Did your congregation attend a lay training meeting to help them learn how to implement the prescriptions?

- Yes
- No

10. Has your congregation experienced growth since implementing the prescriptions?

Yes

No

APPENDIX B

Questions for Interview with Paul Borden

1. What ministries were you involved in prior to GHC that helped you develop the process?
2. How have the statistics changed since the publishing of *Hit the Bullseye*?
3. How many Southern Baptist associations have adopted *HTB* principles? Have the successful percentages translated across Southern Baptist lines?
4. What obstacles have you encountered in implementing the Accountable Leadership method in churches?
5. What percentage of churches vote the prescriptions up?
6. Do all of those churches that vote for the prescriptions agree to the AL method?
7. What do you see as the future of GHC?

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MINISTERIAL

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Youth Pastor, Hallmark Baptist Church, Fort Worth, TX 1977-1978

Associate Pastor, Lanakila Baptist Church, Waipahu, HI, 1979-1981

Senior Pastor, Fellowship Baptist Church, Chesapeake, VA 1982-1999

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IRB APPROVAL

July 24, 2012

IRB Approval 1369.072412: Growing Healthy Churches: Leading Local Churches through Change, Revitalization and Reproduction

Dear Donald,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

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