

New Hope Community Church



Senior Pastor Ray Cotton

The purpose of the study was to identify transferable principles and practices used by churches that have been successful in attracting and assimilating unchurched people. The following is a summary of a leadership interview, three new Christian interviews, a survey of printed materials and an on site visit.

Question #1. What principles and practices used by these churches have been most successful in attracting and evangelizing unchurched people?

New Hope Community Church has an advantage in attracting unchurched people that few churches enjoy—visibility. Two of the new Christians interviewed indicated that the church’s visibility and location along the freeway played a major role in visiting New Hope. People are also attracted because of the music and worship, and the strong children’s and youth ministries.

Pastor Ray Cotton wants to attract and minister to the “next generation” while remaining a cross-generational ministry. The church’s vision is “to make disciples from one generation to the next.”

New Hope’s tradition has been to attract people through events. However, Pastor Cotton states, “we are trying to change to outreach through service.”



Question #2. How do these churches welcome and follow-up unchurched visitors and new converts?

Visitors are well received at New Hope Community Church. The first touch is in the parking lot. They are greeted again before and after entering the front doors. A welcome table with information for guests is set up just inside the main entrance where hosts answer questions and provide directions to newcomers. An information center is available on Sundays and throughout the week. After each worship service a hospitality center is available for first time guests and people who are relatively new to the church. Here they can enjoy a free espresso and treats while they talk with people who can answer questions and provide literature about New Hope’s many ministries. Attention to guests is also illustrated by the weekly bulletin. “The front of our bulletin is always geared toward the visitors” states Pastor Cotton. “They get the front page. It has the pertinent information that they need to navigate their way around the church.”



Trained “Connection Callers” contact guests and those indicating a spiritual commitment Tuesday evening. They help connect these people with the various ministries of the church as well as encourage them to attend the “Discovery Class.” The callers continue to make contact with these individuals over a four to six weeks unless they have indicated they are connected in a ministry at New Hope or attending another local church.

Question #3. How do these churches provide an opportunity for new people to gain a sense of belonging?

Helping newcomers gain a sense of belonging begins at the Hospitality Center on Sundays. Next, there are the Connection Callers who seek to help people find the area of ministry they most relate to. When asked, “Why did you stay at New Hope?” Nick & Vickie Vetter replied, “We’ve been able to actually see and experience how God is working in a church. The programs are alive and people are pursuing a relationship with God and it is evident in their personal relationships. It’s apparent that people are sincere.”

The Discovery Class is one of the best places for newcomers to connect. Pastor Cotton states, “Out of that class we are hoping that they will find a connection to some kind of ministry.” During the eight-week class, building relationships is encouraged by

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allowing half of the class time to be spent in small groups and half in teaching. Each small group has a host or mentor couple that has been at New Hope for some time. The pastoral staff members are also introduced throughout the eight weeks of the class. During the class people learn about the mission, vision, values, beliefs and ministry opportunities of the church. Those who complete the Discovery Class join the church as

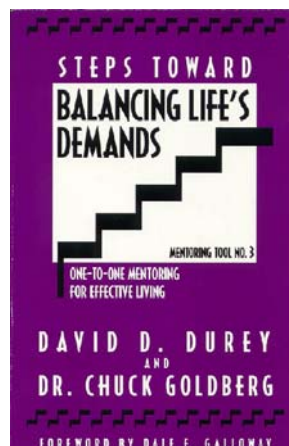
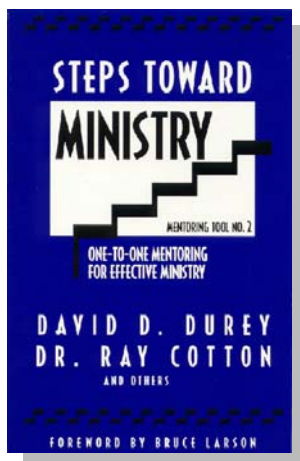
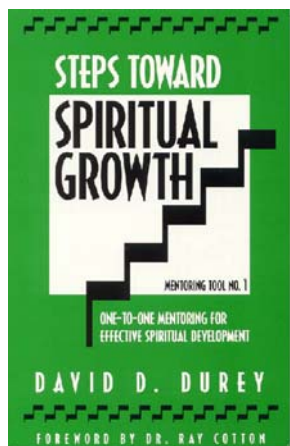


“Partners in Ministry.”

Small groups are the primary way that people create and sustain a sense of belonging at New Hope. Twice each year there is a major emphasis on small group sign up. Pastor Cotton states, “We are really trying to build the group life throughout the entire structure of the church so that people do have those opportunities to enter into relationships.” In fact, participating in a small group is one of the general expectations of members at New Hope.

Question #4. How do these churches see that people are disciplined into fully devoted followers of Christ?

New Hope has written and published a mentoring series for basic discipleship and ministry skill training. Titles include *Steps Toward Spiritual Growth*; *Steps Toward Ministry*; and *Steps Toward Balancing Life’s Demands*. This material is designed so that it can be used effectively in a one-on-one mentoring relationship or in a triad or small group setting. Pastor Cotton explains, “What we really want to do, is make sure that people have the basics and that they are in the process of spiritual development. Because if they are not, we are going to lose them.”



One successful small group emphasis has been Henry Blackaby's workbook *Experiencing God*. "Our Experiencing God series has been one that, probably more than any other series we have ever done, has really fostered ... spiritual seeking, spiritual growth and formation--moving beyond where a person is and being challenged to do that. I see in some way that probably our Experiencing God groups will be one of the basic elements that we recommend for spiritual formation as new people come into the life of our church" states Pastor Cotton.

Through worship services Pastor Cotton is trying to motivate people for spiritual growth, "I try to create the expectation from the pulpit that if you are not growing, something is wrong in your life." He also emphasizes service as part of the discipleship process. "We are trying to move people to a mindset of serving. How can I serve the Lord by serving others? Because that to me is a part of the discipleship process. If spiritual formation and our maturity does not move us beyond our own concerns and our own lifestyle into active ministry in the life of the church and the community, we really haven't accomplished spiritual formation."

So what does it mean for a person to have been fully assimilated at New Hope Community Church? They have attended the Discovery Class and affirmed their commitment to Christ as Savior through water baptism. They are on a personal track of spiritual formation and discipleship and have found a place to serve in the life of the church—knowing and understanding how to use their spiritual gifts. They have a group of friends they identify with in the church—a spiritual support group. Pastor Cotton explains, "I consider that someone has been assimilated when they have a group of friends, either formally or informally, where they feel that those people can pray with them, they can call them on the phone--that they have a spiritual support group in the life of the church. It can be choir, the church session, their family group in youth group, it can be a small group. But do they have a group of people where they can identify at least 6-8 people by first name and feel like those people care about them? If they feel connected to a smaller group they feel connected to the church. If they don't feel connected to a smaller group then they feel like they are really not connected to this church." Finally, they are committed to the church financially. Pastor Cotton states, "I feel like stewardship is a part of the assimilation process because when someone makes a commitment to start giving to the church I believe their heart moves a step closer to the church. They have more ownership in it; they have more of a commitment to it. When stewardship is presented as a commitment of our life to Christ, it becomes a part of their growth and spiritual maturity. I think the worst thing that we can do with stewardship is to present it as having to raise money for the church budget. That's the last thing we have to do. What we need to do is challenge people to grow in that area of spiritual commitment. And I do believe that is a part of the assimilation process."

Question #5. How do these churches help people take up the responsibility to serve in personal ministry?

"The Discovery Class is our most important recruiting point. We need to catch them while they are hot," explains Pastor Cotton. "I don't think it is ever too soon to encourage people to serve. I do think, however, that we need to be wise and try to spiritually qualify people. Also, qualify them according to their experience, talents,

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ability and capabilities. Someone who is brand new, who has never served in the church before, should not be leading a small group the next week. But maybe they can serve out in the parking lot or maybe they could help serve coffee. It is never too soon to start encouraging people to serve. Our church is committed to the concept that the ministry of the church is most effectively carried out by all the members of Christ's body. He never intended for the work of the church to be in the hands of a few paid professionals."

All of the New Hope Community Church pastoral team recruit, mobilize and train lay leaders and volunteers for their areas of responsibility. Each ministry leader meets with their lay ministers for an hour training meeting prior to a Sunday evening dinner and rally called L.I.F.T. (Living in Focus Together). This month's meeting provides some 450 lay ministers with fellowship, encouragement, vision, recognition and information to keep them strengthened and motivated as part of the greater ministry team of the church.

Map:



Assimilation Study - Participant Information (Fall 2000)

Church Name New Hope Community Church Region SE Portland
Street Address 11731 SE Stevens Road
City Portland State OR Zip Code 97266
Phone 503-659-5683 FAX 503-659-3993
Email info@newhopecommunitychurch.org Web www.newhopecommunitychurch.org

1. Denomination independent
2. Date church was founded 1972
3. Founding Senior Pastor Dale Galloway Years in this church 23
4. Current Senior Pastor Ray Cotton Years in this church 5
5. Average Weekend Worship attendance 1700
6. Average number of visitors each Sunday 35
7. Current Membership 1920
 - Adults 1161
 - Youth 167
 - Children 592
8. Number of conversions during the past 12 months 151
9. Number of new members received during the past 12 months 171
 - Number from transfer (previously active in another church) 18
 - Number from conversion (or with no previous church affiliation) 153
10. Christian Education Classes
 - # of Adult Classes 12 Weekly attendance 285
 - # of Youth Classes 2 Weekly attendance 95
 - # of Children Classes 24 Weekly attendance 440
11. Small Groups/Cells
 - # of Adult Groups 120 Weekly attendance 840
 - # of Youth Groups 15 Weekly attendance 180
 - # of Children Groups 6 Weekly attendance 100
12. Large groups meeting midweek
 - Youth Ministry 2 Weekly attendance 110
 - Children Ministry 1 Weekly attendance 100
 - Women's Ministry 1 Weekly attendance 90
 - Men's Ministry 0 Weekly attendance 0
 - College/Career 1 Weekly attendance 60
 - Young Singles 1 Weekly attendance 40
13. Number of people with an identifiable ministry 420 Or approximate % 25%
14. Number of core lay leaders 150 Number of paid pastoral/ministry staff 12
15. Number of churches planted by the church 0
16. Describe your congregation's socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural distinctions:
 - 90% White, anglo with Hispanic and a small number of Afro-American
 - Middle – upper middle class