

New Beginnings Christian Center



Associate Pastor, Brad Makowski

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 Beginnings is a cross-cultural, multi-ethnic congregation. “We are actively trying to reach out cross-culturally,” states Associate Pastor, Brad Makowski. “We are trying to reach the African-American culture, the Hispanic, and the Asian culture, and we use our worship as a tool. The more urban and gospel music style that we use the more we are able to attract a more diverse group culturally.” For example, one Afro-American teenager stated that he came to church with his mom and walked in and heard rappin' in the youth group. And he thought to himself, “Man, I did not know that people rapped in church. You know, cool gospel rap, I didn't know that.” Now, this young man, who has



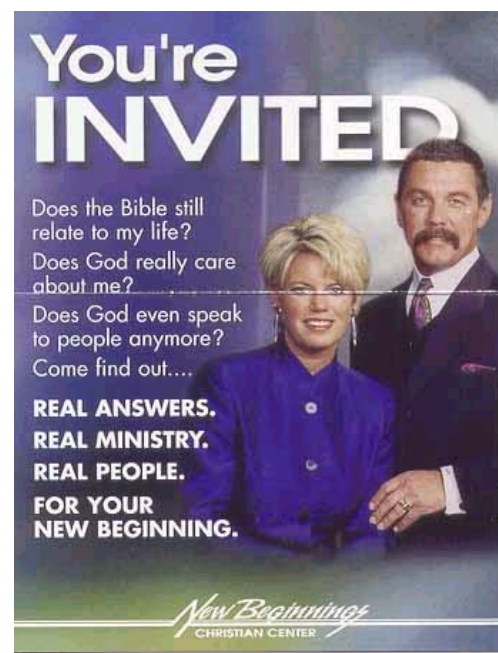
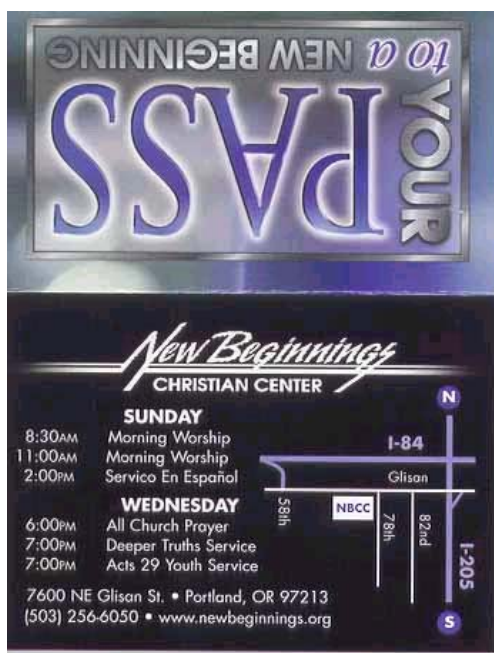
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been a Christian for about two years, is bringing friends to the Wednesday night Acts 29 Youth service to hear him perform "cool gospel rap" as well.

New Beginnings has a goal of being 50% non-white. To do that they use different strategies to reach out into each ethnic group. First, they believe that you have to have a multi-racial staff if you are going to have a multi-racial congregation. So, they hire non-white staff and put them in front of the people so that when members of different ethnic groups come in they see someone from their own culture. Secondly, it is important that the Senior Pastor and other white leaders within the church maintain close friendships with members of each ethnic group. It is important that they see that the Senior Pastor is close to those staff Pastors who are from others cultures and that they relate well together. Makowski explains, "If I don't have any black friends, I probably won't have any black congregation members. But if I have close black friends then the black community opens themselves up to me. Likewise, if I have Hispanic friends the Hispanic community will open up. The promise is that God said, 'I will give you the nations for your inheritance.' So, we are pretty bold in saying the if you are not a multi-racial church you're probably not fulfilling all that God has purposed for the church."

"We don't have a targeted group; we are trying to reach them all," states Makowski. "You can come into our church and find an executive sitting next to a guy all tattooed up and just out of prison. So, we are not trying reach anyone in particular." New Beginnings seeks to touch the down-and-outers as well as the up-and-outers equally. But, because of their current location, they attract more down-and-outer than up-and-outers. They only have 95 parking spaces for a weekly average attendance of 3000 and that creates a challenge for those who are driving in.

One of the ways that New Beginnings mobilizes their people for outreach is by giving them a tool called, "Your Pass to New Beginnings." It's just a small folded card that gives a little introduction and an invitation to the church with service times and a map. "Our people are encouraged very strongly to build relationships outside of their Christian community," states Makowski. Because of having so many conversions and new people, New Beginnings has a steady stream of unchurched people. "Many of our



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people have a lot of unsaved friends and acquaintances that they want to see get saved. So, we create an opportunity for our people to bring their friends by providing a service that is attractive to someone from the outside looking in," explains Makowski. "I think we pray them in. We really believe God will send the unchurched. So, we pray over the spiritual forces of our city believing that we play a part in breaking down spiritual strongholds. But the number one reason people come is because our people go after them." One woman, who is a relatively new Christian and also new to the church stated, "In this church, they feed you so much you want to pull people in. I have nine people who are customers at my shop that are now coming to New Beginnings."



New Beginnings also has a cell ministry that has winning souls as its primary purpose. Their five-fold purpose states, "I have a purpose, my purpose is winning souls, I fulfill my purpose best in a group, I have limited time to fulfill my purpose, and therefore I must do it today.' That drives our cell ministry," states Makowski. People are given an invitation to receive Christ through cells as well as at celebration worship services. In the public services an altar call is almost always given with 20-50 people responding each time. However, an equal number of people are saved through cells. "The cells are not a place for people to come together and just be nurtured and cared for, although that happens," declares Makowski. "The primary purpose of a cell is winning the lost. So, they are partnering in prayer and partnering in evangelism—seeking to get unsaved people to the cell. If we can get them to the cell first then we can get them into the church. If you win a friend, you win a convert. The coffeepot and the barbecue are their main evangelistic tools. 'The hungry ones stay around and listen.' That is what we teach our cell leaders."

The church also does outreaches. Their youth go down to Pioneer Square to do rap and dance. They also offer block parties with cells. They did "Bless the Children" in Northeast Portland where they gave out backpacks with school supplies and prayed over the kids. Makowski explains, "We are seeking to create visibility for the church so that when they sense a spiritual need they will remember New Beginnings."

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

New Beginnings provides a beautiful “Welcome Center” for guests where they can receive printed information on the numerous ministries of the church. In addition to ushers and greeters, they have “minglers” whose specific job is to look for “lost souls.” They will help direct people to the children’s area or youth department—wherever visitors are seeking to go.



During worship services visitors are welcomed and identified in a warm, non-threatening way. After an initial song at the opening of the worship service one of the pastors will share some announcements. Then, after the announcements a pastor will ask those who are there for the first time to wave at them because they would like to say “hi.” As they wave, greeters, who are in the aisles watching, go straight to the visitors with a welcome packet and a registration card. That pastor will then ask the guests to fill out the card and put it in the offering. “When we get a visitor’s card or a communication card we will give it to a district pastor who will call them and assign it to a cell leader who, in turn, is asked to call and invite the visitor to their cell meeting,” explains Makowski. “Our goal is to get them back to church and into New Beginnings 101 class. A letter also goes out inviting them to the class. Then the District pastor will call again to make sure that the cell leader has made contact with the visitor. So, they should have gotten at least three calls and a letter during that week.”

The follow-up for new converts is similar to that of visitor follow-up, though new converts get the highest priority. Again, the first goal is to get them into the New Beginnings 101 class that next Sunday. This is a six-week class that covers fundamentals like prayer, Bible study, forgiveness, overcoming temptation and the value church attendance. There are about 30 to 60 who attend each week. The class is the first step in the Leadership School that is illustrated by a base diamond. The church also seeks to get new converts signed up for baptism right away. Baptism is offered the first Sunday of each month. Again, the cell leader’s role is key. It is the cell leader’s responsibility to connect with the new convert relationally and bring them to the classes.

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

New Beginnings attempts to connect newcomers into vital relationships in the church through their cell ministry. The purpose of the cell ministry is to fulfill the Great Commission, provide quality pastoral care, nurture new believers, build mature disciples, and train effective leaders in the local church through life-giving relationships. Cells consist of 5-12 people who meet weekly in homes, on the job, or wherever they might choose throughout the Portland and Vancouver area. The group members partner in helping one another live a victorious Christian life and to win loved ones to the kingdom of God.

The cell ministry is only about a year and a half old (as of fall 2000) and the church already has more than 150 cells. The primary type of cell is the "family cell." However, they do also have other specialty cells: men's, women's, business, children's, etc. Makowski explains, "We leave it up to the leader, whatever group of people they relate to—perhaps even sports cells. They will be homogeneous cells. Senior Pastor Larry Huch records a 7-10 minute video teaching for each cell meeting and provides discussion questions."

Cells meet formally every other week and informally on weeks between for outreach--getting together to have fun. It is a meeting for building relationships. They may go get ice cream or play basketball together. Pastor Makowski illustrates the goal of these informal meetings through a recent experience in his cell, "Just a few weeks ago we played a game called 'Battle of the Sexes.' It just a game where the men are against the women. Men try to answer questions that only the women would know and women try to answer questions that only men would know. People invited their friends and I invited my chiropractor and his wife and they thought, 'Oh that would be fun.' They came over and we had a great time and so we invited them back the next week. They came back the next week and we were doing a little study and prayer time and all of a sudden his wife starts to cry. She said, 'I don't know why I have this resistance inside of me toward the things of God. I don't like it.' The meeting stopped and we began to pray for this woman. And she had a wonderful breakthrough. And that's exactly what we wanted to happen."

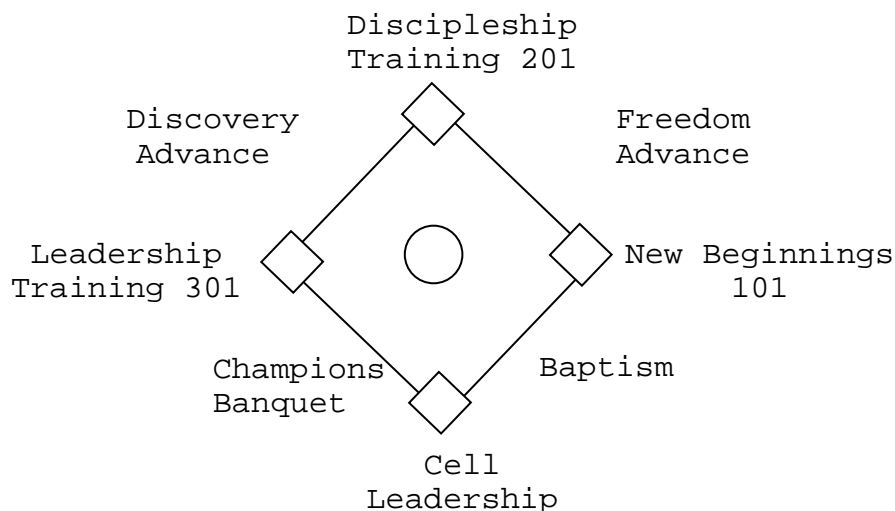
There are five key areas that cell groups address: caring for one another; evangelism; learning the Word of God; leadership development and success in life. These small cell groups provide members of this large congregation with an effective way to care for individual and family needs by creating a personal and intimate setting for everyone who will attend a cell. These groups also call people to team together to pray and strategically plan ways of reaching their unsaved friends, neighbors and family members. Also, cells not only help people learn God's Word, they also help them put it into practice by providing an environment that is supportive and encouraging. Cells are also training centers for developing personal and leadership potential that will enrich marriages, family life and secular work as well. Through its support and spiritual dynamic, cell members have experienced life-changing results. Many have been healed, prayers have been answered, loved ones saved and financial miracles have been documented. The priority of cells at New Beginnings is illustrated by Pastor Makowski's

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comment, “Ultimately, our goal is to change the view of normal Christianity to include participation in both worship celebration and a cell group.”

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

In the worship folder each week, New Beginnings promotes spiritual growth opportunities for their people: water baptism; leadership development; cell groups and Freedom Advance. The baseball diamond diagram illustrates the spiritual development path. New believers are encouraged to sign up for water baptism, which is offered on the first Sunday of the month. New Beginnings 101 covers the basics of the Christianity and is for newcomers and new converts. It is offered every Sunday at 9:00 am. The Freedom Advance is a spiritual retreat held away from the church in a hotel. It is limited to 50 persons and is offered every other month. On Friday evening there is an hour of worship then one of the pastors will share their story. This opens the hearts of participants for their own personal healing. Discipleship Training 201 continues to build basic beliefs and habits for successful Christian living and is offered on Wednesday nights. The Discovery Advance helps people identify their spiritual gifts, personality and personal style so they can better understand where they can most successfully serve in ministry. Leadership 301 is designed to equip mature Christians for cell leadership. It covers such things as attitudes, basics of counseling, cell leadership and structures and people skills. Finally, the Champions Banquet honors those who are committing to cell leadership.



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

“Newcomers are encouraged to serve in entry level ministry as soon as possible,” explains Makowski. “They may not have a lot of spiritual depth but they feel like they belong, they feel needed because they have an entry-level job.”

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“As staff and pastors we feel it is our job to disciple and build the body of believers to do the work of service (Ephesians 4:11-12),” states Makowski. “If we are “doing” the work of ministry then we are violating our call as a pastor. Our job is to be discipling and training so that they can fulfill their call and purpose and function in the Body of Christ. We are doing that by our Leadership School. As people proceed through the Leadership School they are introduced to and equipped for ministry opportunities.”

Map/ Photos:



Assimilation Study - Participant Information (Fall 2000)

Church Name New Beginnings Christian Center Region NE Portland
Street Address 7600 NE Glisan
City Portland State OR Zip Code 97213
Phone 503-256-6050 FAX 503-256-2287
Web site www.newbeginnings.org

1. Denomination non-denominational
2. Date church was founded 1990
3. Founding Senior Pastor Larry Huch Years in this church 10
4. Current Senior Pastor Larry Huch Years in this church 10
5. Average Weekend Worship attendance 3000
6. Average number of visitors each Sunday 25
7. Current Membership N/A
 - Adults _____
 - Youth _____
 - Children _____
8. Number of conversions during the past 12 months 973
9. Number of new members received during the past 12 months N/A
 - Number from transfer (previously active in another church) _____
 - Number from conversion (or with no previous church affiliation) _____
10. Christian Education Classes
 - # of Adult Classes 6 Weekly attendance 110
 - # of Youth Classes 2 Weekly attendance 90
 - # of Children Classes 13 Weekly attendance 550
11. Small Groups/Cells
 - # of Adult Groups 113 Weekly attendance 850
 - # of Youth Groups 9 Weekly attendance 90
 - # of Children Groups 2 Weekly attendance 550
12. Large groups meeting midweek
 - Youth Ministry _____ Weekly attendance 200
 - Children Ministry _____ Weekly attendance 225
 - Women's Ministry _____ Weekly attendance _____
 - Men's Ministry _____ Weekly attendance _____
 - Other Ministry Overcomers Weekly attendance 60
 - Other Ministry _____ Weekly attendance _____
13. Number of people with an identifiable ministry _____ Or approximate % 50%
14. Number of core lay leaders 220 Number of paid pastoral/ministry staff 18
15. Number of churches planted by the church 3
16. Describe your congregation's socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural distinctions:
 - Inner city – multiethnic and multiracial including Afro-American, Hispanics, Asian Indian, American Indian, Russians, Eastern Europeans and Asians.