

New Heights Church



Executive Pastor, Paul MacLurg

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?

Pastor Paul MacLurg identifies three primary reasons why unchurched people are attracted to New Heights Church. First, New Heights has had a good name in the community. People have heard that they will be accepted and loved “where they are at” at New Heights, that they don’t have to measure up to some standard in order to attend the church. “It is actually part of our ethos,” comments MacLurg, “come as you are, bumps, bruises, aches, imperfections and you are not going to get browbeat for it.” Second, New Heights is a “full service” church, offering a large variety of need-meeting ministries for all ages and stages of life. Finally, New Heights has a reputation for strong preaching and teaching in its public worship services.



Participant Summary: “Attracting and Assimilating the Unchurched in the 21st Century”
A study of leading churches in the Portland/Vancouver area.

New Height’s mission is to “find, fold and heal God’s lost and untended and hurting sheep,” states MacLurg. “We are after unchurched people, people who are lost, who don’t know Christ at all. Yet, know we can’t ‘catch every lost person in the community.’” New Heights is attracting unchurched seekers as well as attracting people who have a church background but are disconnected from any church because they have been hurt.

New Heights mobilizes its members for evangelistic outreach by providing ministries that are attractive and helpful to the unchurched. One example is the MOM’S group (Moms Offering Moms Support). It targets mothers of preschoolers and infants. It is a ministry where moms who are believers can interact with disconnected and unchurched moms. They don’t have to cook the snacks, they don’t have to care for the children—their kids are cared for at the same time. They come here to talk about how to care for their kids. They are not pushed, there is no prayer at that meeting, there is no Bible study, they simply come and receive support. Evangelistic outreach is provided by trained table leaders who build relationships with the unchurched moms. These leaders know how to lead people to Jesus. Unchurched moms are introduced to Jesus Christ because they come and experience love and acceptance as they are.

Sports ministry is another evangelism entry point. New Heights offers golf tournaments, flag football, a basketball league, hunter safety courses, and a sportsmen’s show and banquet. Pastor MacLurg explains, “It’s a ‘you and who’ ministry—‘you’ the believer, ‘who’ are you inviting? If people want to come and get involved in sports ministry we ask, ‘who are you bringing with you?’ If a person has attended New Heights for 3 to 6 months or less, we don’t question them. We don’t know if they are believers or not but it is a value that we really hold up high so that the sports ministry doesn’t just become a church league. It is an evangelism ministry that is primarily focused on men, 21 to 50, because we know if we get men, we get families. Again, in these sports ministries leaders are trained how to develop relationships and how to evangelize.”



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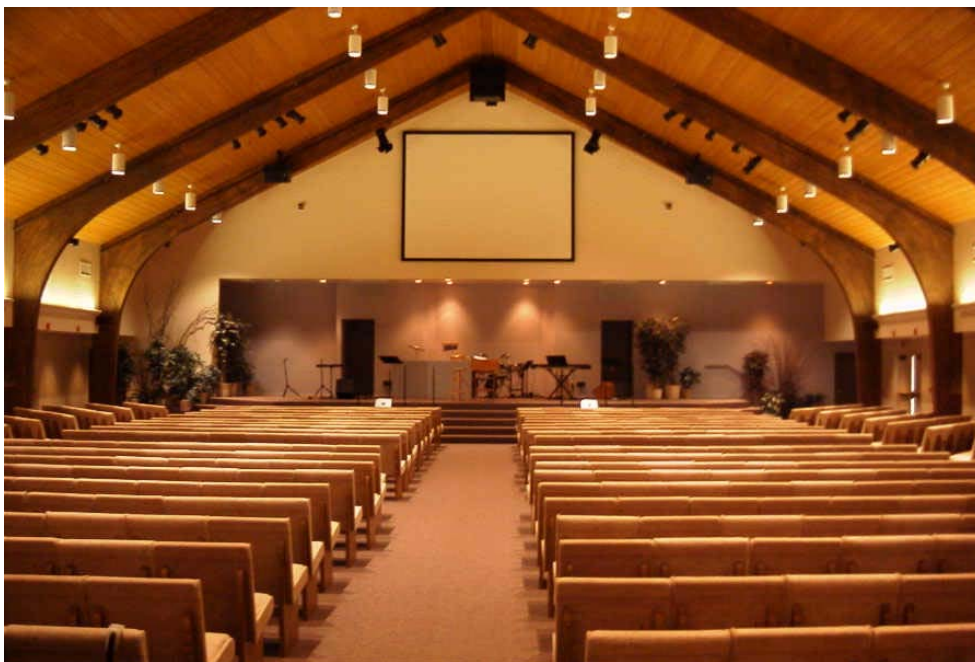
New Heights also offers a medical clinic as a ministry to the community. The medical clinic is another path where people can come and be cared for and if there is an opportunity the staff are trained to share their faith in Jesus.

New Heights offers newcomers a clear presentation of the gospel publicly, privately, and through their New Heights 101 membership course. In the public worship services New Heights allows people to respond in a private way but they do not ask people to make a public response to the gospel. Pastor MacLurg states, “Frankly, regarding the public presentation of the gospel, I’ve found that a lot of people don’t get it until someone sits down with them personally and says, ‘here’s what the Bible says about how you can know for sure that you are going to heaven, how you can be forgiven, how to be saved.’” Therefore, New Heights seeks to equip members and lay leaders with tools that they can use to share the gospel on a person to person basis.

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

At New Heights newcomers and visitors are treated as “guests.” During each of the worship services an individual or a couple share 30 seconds on what it was like for them when they came as guests and how they got connected and what has been great about being at New Heights. “We do that specifically for our guests,” explains Pastor MacLurg.

In greeting their guests, they don’t ask them to stand, instead, they ask them to remain seated while the regular attenders stand in their honor. Guests then join everyone in standing when a regular attender shakes their hand. “So, we are not trying to point them out except to a very small segment, not to the whole group.”



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

New Heights offers a variety of connection points for new people. Twelve to fourteen mid-sized classes for adults, as well as classes for children and youth, are offered during the same times as the five weekend worship services. Other mid-sized groups and ministries are available throughout the week for all ages as well. In addition to mid-sized groups, New Heights relies heavily on small groups in order to help people retain close supportive relationships.

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

In addition to small groups that provide a variety of discipleship materials, New Heights offers a series of courses that teach the fundamentals for spiritual growth. New Heights 101 is the first step toward baptism, membership and ministry involvement and it is offered twice monthly. Beyond this, New Heights also offers three six week spiritual growth classes called Summit Courses: Summit 1 – *Considering Your Personal Walk with God*; Summit 2 – *Learning the Steps to Spiritual Growth*; Summit 3 – *Discovering God's Path for Your Future*.

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

Through New Heights 101, right from the beginning, they try to communicate the value, 'find a place, find a function.' The leaders of New Heights want people to get in relationships and get involved in ministry. They also communicate to believers who have moved to the area and chosen New Heights as a home church, that they need to ask themselves, 'how will I serve?' Pastor MacLurg comments, "We believe that God moved you here for a reason. You are here in the Body of Christ and he has given you gifts to be used."

Six to eight times per year New Heights offers the Niche Seminar, a two and one-half hour class that helps Christians discover their S.H.A.P.E. (Spiritual gift, Heart or passions, Abilities, Personal style, and Experiences), and their most natural fit for serving at New Heights. The church also has a 'train your replacement' mentality. They expect current leaders to recruit and train new leaders who will be able to duplicate or replace themselves.

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Map/ Photos:



Assimilation Study - Participant Information (Fall 2000)

Church Name New Heights Church Region Vancouver, WA
Street Address 7913 NE 58th Ave
City Vancouver State WA Zip Code 98665
Phone 360-694-4985 FAX 360-694-0219
Web site www.newheights.org

1. Denomination Baptist General Conference
2. Date church was founded 1956
3. Founding Senior Pastor John Anderson Years in this church 22
4. Current Senior Pastor Matt Hanna Years in this church 9
5. Average Weekend Worship attendance 3000
6. Average number of visitors each Sunday 50+
7. Current Membership 1000
 - Adults ?
 - Youth ?
 - Children ?
8. Number of conversions during the past 12 months 50
9. Number of new members received during the past 12 months 100
 - Number from transfer (previously active in another church) 60
 - Number from conversion (or with no previous church affiliation) 40
10. Christian Education Classes
 - # of Adult Classes 21 Weekly attendance 450
 - # of Youth Classes 4 Weekly attendance 250
 - # of Children Classes 67 Weekly attendance 700+
11. Small Groups/Cells
 - # of Adult Groups 50 Weekly attendance 600
 - # of Youth Groups 12 Weekly attendance 120
 - # of Children Groups --- Weekly attendance ---
12. Large groups meeting midweek
 - Youth Ministry middle school/high school Weekly attendance 70/100
 - Children Ministry Awana Weekly attendance 300
 - Women's Ministry 3 groups Weekly attendance 300+
 - Other Ministry Support/recovery Ministry Weekly attendance 50+
 - Other Ministry First place – weight loss Weekly attendance 120
 - Other Ministry college/20s Weekly attendance 40/30
13. Number of people with an identifiable ministry --- Or approximate % 40%
14. Number of core lay leaders --- Number of paid pastoral/ministry staff ---
15. Number of churches planted by the church ---
16. Describe your congregation's socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural distinctions: