

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

“We get a lot of people who come through here on our special events but we find that the people who stay and connect have some kind of relational connection,” explains Wright. “Typically, they stay here because a friend invited them to the event. We are trying to let the event be a tool for relational evangelism rather than depending on the big event to accomplish all the evangelism in itself.”

A second strategy used by the church is to minister to the felt needs of both church and unchurched people through support groups and educational classes. Support ministries include such groups as divorce or grief recovery. Wednesday Night Workshops are educational classes that are offered at both 6:00 PM and 7:00 PM. These quarterly elective classes address many topics for spiritual growth as well as life skill courses such as computer skills for beginners, enhancing people skills, changing employment successfully, writing skills, self image and life skills.

A third strategy that has been successful at Portland Christian Center is to reach out to unchurched people through ministry to their children. The church offers a high quality pre-school and kindergarten to the community. This state-licensed program is called Hilltop Preschool and Kindergarten.



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

“We have greeters that start all the way from the parking lot,” explains Wright. “Parking is an issue here, so we have shuttle buses that run. And we have our first set of greeters that actually meet people in the parking lots; they are our parking attendants. We do have a visitor parking area. When visitors get to the door they are welcomed by another set of greeters who hand them a menu of what is being served here that day. Also, our Hospitality Center is another place where people can come and get information, a cup of coffee, a donut and actually sit down with someone and have a conversation about the church and find out information about different ministries in the church.”

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“We don’t have visitors raise their hand or otherwise identify themselves in the worship services,” states Wright. “We simply say that if you are a guest we have a gift for you at the Hospitality Center.”

During the following week, visitors will receive several points of contact beginning with a letter from Senior Pastor, Bill Wilson. If they supply an e-mail address they also receive an email greeting and a phone call from the telecare team on Tuesday nights. The callers give one initial phone call to visitors thanking them for coming but do not continue to call after that initial contact. During the call the telecare team seeks to identify any personal needs that can be met. A visitor information sheet is created as a result of the welcome call and given to staff as a referral sheet.



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

Portland Christian Center recognizes that people everywhere want to be loved and accepted, to feel a sense of belonging. Therefore, the church seeks to provide a place where ministry is practical, encouraging and helpful—a place with a message of hope for people. The church offers entry points of ministry for singles, families, youth, children, men and women. Sunday morning and Wednesday evening are the primary times when these connection ministries are offered. In addition, they offer entry-level classes for newcomers and new Christians such as “First Things First” and “New Members.” The church has also organized social activities such as “Dinners for Eight,” where four couples share a meal and an evening of making new friends within the church.

One newcomer to Portland Christian Center commented on the support, friendship and belonging he found within the Divorce Recovery class. “I met six other people at this group that came along side of me and I came along side of them and we got through some really tough times. That camaraderie and the whole outpouring of faith got me through those tough times. We actually still get together and that was three years ago. That’s the way I got into Portland Christian.”

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

Discipleship happens through Sunday a.m. classes, Wednesday Night Workshops and men's and women's groups where people connect relationally. "First Things First" is one elective that provides foundational ingredients for successful Christian living—how to pray, how to read the Bible, how to have a quiet time with God and much more. There is no particular set of classes that are required or promoted. However, several of the Wednesday Night Workshops are spiritual development electives: "Personal Holiness In Times of Temptation," "Steps To Build an Unshakable Faith," and "Developing A Heart For God." Pastor Wright comments, "It's more of a shot gun approach. No matter where you get connected you are going to be getting some input on your spiritual life that will help you grow."

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

Finding a place of service is not difficult at Portland Christian Center. In addition to the weekly ministry opportunities there are the special events which require hundreds of volunteers. At Christmas time they have over 500 volunteers that participate in their concerts and over 300 volunteers help in the Easter presentations.

The church offers the Networking class right on the tail end of the membership class. New members are encouraged to take Network as a logical second step. It is a six-week class that teaches about spiritual gifts, passions and personal styles of service. It is offered twice a year. Wright explains, "We encourage people to go through the class whether they are new members or not because it helps with assimilation. When people discover their gifts, talents and their passions it encourages them to participate and get involved."

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Map/ Photos:



Assimilation Study - Participant Information (Fall 2000)

Church Name Portland Christian Center Region SW Portland
Street Address 5700 SW Dosch Road
City Portland State OR Zip Code 97201
Phone 503-245-7735 FAX 503-245-2766
Web site www.portlandchristiancenter.com

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1. Denomination Assemblies of God
 2. Date church was founded 1924 Chartered in Assemblies of God in 1928
 3. Founding Senior Pastor Pastor Walker Years in this church ?
 4. Current Senior Pastor Bill Wilson Years in this church 13
 5. Average Weekend Worship attendance 1,790
 6. Average number of visitors each Sunday 10
 7. Current Membership 521
 - Adults 520
 - Youth _____
 - Children N/A
 8. Number of conversions during the past 12 months 500
 9. Number of new members received during the past 12 months 44
 - Number from transfer (previously active in another church) 10
 - Number from conversion (or with no previous church affiliation) 34
 10. Christian Education Classes
 - # of Adult Classes 22 Weekly attendance 620
 - # of Youth Classes 4 Weekly attendance 175
 - # of Children Classes 8 rotations +2 Weekly attendance 175
 11. Small Groups/Cells
 - # of Adult Groups 29 Weekly attendance 330
 - # of Youth Groups 4 Weekly attendance 92
 - # of Children Groups _____ Weekly attendance _____
 12. Large groups meeting midweek
 - Youth Ministry 3 Weekly attendance 150
 - Children Ministry 4 Weekly attendance 125
 - Women's Ministry 3 Weekly attendance 120
 - Men's Ministry _____ Weekly attendance _____
 - Other Ministry single adult Weekly attendance 125
 - Other Ministry Wednesday Workshops Weekly attendance 300
 13. Number of people with an identifiable ministry _____ Or approximate % 20%
 14. Number of core lay leaders 150 Number of paid pastoral/ministry staff 24
 15. Number of churches planted by the church 0
 16. Describe your congregation's socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural distinctions:
 - 80% white; 15% Asian, islander; 5% African American
 - Middle – upper middle class