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The Changing Face of Outreach

Rev. Dr. David Breckenridge

There is nothing new about the need of the church to grow. In fact, rightly understood, we don't grow a

church because we need for it to grow for whatever reason—be that critical mass as a whole or in a particular department or budget or whatever. We seek the growth of the church because that is who we are. The church is, among other things, those who respond to the great commandment to go, baptize, teach, serve. We do not exist for ourselves but to make available the grace of God to a world that is lost in more ways than can be named. To say that a church is seeking to grow is redundant.

But how churches grow has changed. There was a time when it was assumed that everyone went to church or would go to church, when being a member of some church was essential to being a part of a community. In such a time, churches did not need to go out in search of prospects, the prospects came to them. You could call this the “build it and they will come” plan. There are those churches for whom this model still works today—suburban churches with neighborhoods springing up around them, mega churches with the biggest and brightest and latest of everything.

But even so, this model does not work as it once did. Church, especially church membership and regular participation, is not an assumed aspect of our society. Even suburban and mega churches are not attracting the percentages of community members that they once did. The fact is that even professing Christians will just as soon not go to church these days as go, or they will watch it on TV or the internet. And non-Christians feel no compulsion to go to church for any reason. They must be convinced that there is something for them or at least worth their time and energy for them to give that time and energy to come to church.

So, how do churches like ours

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grow? How will we grow? Well, quality worship, innovative and interesting programs, publicity and public relations can help. But none of that will generally, in and of itself, be the key to growth for churches like us. The key is one word: relationships. We must dare to initiate and grow relationships with other people and find ways of saying, “I'm excited about what is going on at my church, and I would like you to come and be a part of that.” Or something like that.

Now, to be blunt, we, all of us, need to find ways of doing that on our

own, in ways that are comfortable to us. I challenge you to begin praying and practicing that even now. But beginning in 2009, we are going to give some of you a tool to help you do that. Early in 2009, we are going to start small in-home study groups throughout the metropolitan area. The units of study will vary. The formats may be different. The time and place and frequency of meetings may differ. They will hopefully enrich the spiritual growth and fellowship of those members, but the primary goal will be to invite and develop relationships with those without a church home. It will be a stepping stone to inviting such individuals into a relationship with our church as a whole.

The title of this article is “The Changing Face of Outreach.” But when you think about it, it is a misnomer. The “Face” of outreach has never changed. It has always been a human face. This is true even for God, who reached out to us in and through the face of Jesus. People still experience love and grace in and through relationships. What has changed for churches like ours, however, is that no longer can we rely or wait on people to come to us seeking those relationships; we must reach out to them offering such relationship, and do so largely beyond the walls of this church.

Are you ready for what God is going to do in and through First Baptist Church in 2009? I know I am.

2 Letters, TV Sponsorships, CareNet LETTERS

from our members and friends...

Dear Church Family,

Thank you for your expressions of love and sympathy in the death of my mother, Edna Shellabarger. Your prayers, words and memorials are appreciated more than words can express. It is a blessing to have such a wonderful church family.

In His Love,

Buzz Shellabarger

Dear First Baptist,

The following words are coming very late, but they are not cold because they are coming straight from my heart.

Last October, Dr. Carol visited me in my home and served the Lord's Supper. As I prayed and wept, remembering the death of my beloved Martha two years prior, like a flash I suddenly realized how very intensely she was listening to each and

every one of my words. Then it really dawned upon me the depth of her great love for my Jesus. How wonderful!

Oh, yes, I know that I know, that my Jesus and your Jesus is leading His dear children along all the many avenues of ministry and service at First Baptist.

How greatly blessed is our church with leaders who truly love my Jesus.

Your little brother,
Leonard Riley

Television Sponsorship Costs Go Down in 2009

On December 14, 2008, we celebrated our 30th anniversary of the Television Ministry. During the year, there were 14 Sundays of television broadcasts given by individuals, Sunday School Classes and Departments. In a move to open up these opportunities to more people, we are rolling back the price of sponsorship in 2009 from \$2,900 per Sunday to **\$2,500 per Sunday**.

Giving a television broadcast is a great gift to the church, since it frees up budget money for other areas of ministry, and it is a great gift to the community, since almost 40,000 people watch the church service each Sunday morning at 11:00. It is the only church service televised live in the Mid-South.

We want to say thanks to all those who have donated broadcasts in the past, and to our volunteers who work in the broadcast control booth, at the three cameras, and on the audio boards each Sunday. We could not do this without them! Another group of volunteers answers our phone-in Prayer Line each week during the broadcast, and during our Midday Prayer service on Tuesday, these requests are shared in prayer by our ministers.

If you would like to donate a TV service in 2009, please call **Rev. Ray Hatton** at 454-1131 for details and to choose a date. You may wish to partner with someone else to make the donation, or with a group. The service may be given in memory or in honor of someone special. There will be a printed acknowledgment in the Sunday order of worship (similar to the giving of flowers), and there will be a full-screen acknowledgment at the end of the TV broadcast. Cost this year is \$2,500. Please consider your part in sharing First Baptist with our community in this very special way.

Laotian Update

On November 22 the Lao congregation had its first Youth Thanksgiving fellowship. We gathered at Thu and Pacher Mitsamphanh's house and ate Turkey mixed with Lao foods for 25 youth. A special thanks to all the young adults who cooked for us. After the meal there was a devotional time in which we reflected having a grateful attitude in spite of our circumstances.

In our Wednesday night ministry

RENEW we have been doing a study series on sexual purity. At the end of the series we had 12 students make a commitment to remain abstinent and seek purity in their lives. Please pray for these students as they seek to live out their commitment.

Also, this year for Christmas we collected gifts for the Angel Christmas Tree program. We enjoyed our Christmas Service on Dec. 13.

Note from Your Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is grateful for the support of our TV ministry. We increased our number of sponsorships from 2007 to 2008, despite challenging economic times. Others gave generously toward the TV ministry even without sponsoring a specific broadcast. For 2009, the amount of a TV sponsorship will be "rolled back" to pre-2007 levels of **\$2,500**.

Please prayerfully consider how you, your family, your Sunday School class, your circle of friends, etc. can help to financially support our TV ministry.

CareNet is Coming in January 2009!

*CARENET is...

Care for one to the other.

Attentiveness to one another in times of crisis or need.

Relational ministry that can deepen through time.

Enrichment of church family life.
Network of compassion.

Extension of our Deacon Ministry.

Truth of the gospel incarnated as the church "loves in both word and deed."

*This new ministry will officially begin January, 2009. We are most grateful to FBC member **Pam Stokes** for her training expertise shared with our care providers through her involvement in the Stephen Ministry.

Memorials & Honoraria, Youth Events, Bible Drill 3

Offering Bearers for January*

January 4: **Hannah Sewell**
and **Shelby Thomas**

January 11: **Justin Jabbour**
and **Margot Weslee Cronk**

January 18: **Ellis Rich** and
Claire Pellegrin

January 25: **Micah Brecken-
ridge** and **Grace Ward**

**If you cannot attend, please
call one of the following to fill
in for you: **Lottie Rich, Knight
or Main Bracey, or Hannah
Breckenridge.***

Bible Drill Begins!

Children's Bible Drill starts
Sunday, January 4, during regular
Sunday School time for children
in Grades K - 6. This three-month
Bible memorization program yields
many benefits for the children and
their families.

Susie Jabbour will work with
K - 3rd graders on learning about the
books of the Bible and what God's
Word has to say in those various
books. **Glenn Everton** will work
with 4th - 6th graders on memorizing
the names of all 66 books, 25 memo-
ry verses and 10 key passages.

A competition element for the
older children makes hiding God's
Word in their hearts fun and excit-
ing. Be in prayer for the children,
their families and their teachers
as they learn about our Christian
faith through God's written Word.

Book Club Meeting

The FBC Book Club will meet
on Sunday, January 4, at 12:15
p.m. in Fellowship Hall to discuss
*Dreams From My Father: A Story
of Race and Inheritance* by Barack
Obama. Join us!

Alzheimer's Group

The next meeting is Wednesday,
Jan. 7 at 6 p.m. in the Parlor.

Memorials

Given in Memory of:

Frances Hays	Ms. Juanita Bristow Mr. & Mrs. Joe Powell Ms. Madge Baker CWEP Committee
Sam Marchand	
Ann Cobb	Ms. Gladys Dickey
Kay Lee	Mr. & Mrs. Bob Lehr
James Lester	Mr. & Mrs. Jim Black
Dorothy Link	CWEP Committee Dr. & Mrs. Dennis Stokes Mr. & Mrs. Ann Powell Mr. & Mrs. Bob Lehr

Honoraria

Given in Honor of:

Ray & Trudy Hatton	The Travelers' Sunday School Class
David Breckenridge & Family	Dr. & Mrs. David Cunningham
Ray Hatton & Family	Dr. & Mrs. David Cunningham
Carol Richardson & Family	Dr. & Mrs. David Cunningham
Richard Wright & Family	Dr. & Mrs. David Cunningham
Cathy Wilhelm	Ms. Ginger Schuette

Young Adult Movie Night Jan. 10 5:30 p.m.

It's movie night at the Paridiso. We will begin the night at McAllister's Deli on Mendenhall at 6:15 p.m. After a light dinner we will walk (or ride depending on the weather) to the Paridiso theater for a guys/girls movie.

The men and women will split up for the movie of their choice. All young adults are strongly encouraged to bring a friend or two to this casual and fun night.

Youth Gathering at Midtown Memphis Pizza Café January 4

School is almost back in session so let's have dinner together at the Memphis Pizza Café on Madison Avenue. Please bring \$10 to help cover the cost of your meal and a drink. We will meet up at MPC at 5:30 p.m.

Young Adult Volleyball Jan. 18th at 5 p.m. in the Family Life Center

Let's beat the cold and move
indoors for our monthly activity.
See you in the gym at 5 p.m.

Youth Pseudo Lock-in Jan. 16 from 7 -12 p.m.

pseu•do Pronunciation [soo-doh]
- adjective// 1. not actually but
having the appearance of. 2. al-
most, approaching, or trying to be.

The night begins at 7 and
is filled with games, food, Wii
tournaments, and more. Parents,
please pick up your youth at 12 a.m.

4 Library Corner, Tax Help, CWEP News

CWEP News

The CWEP celebrated the Christmas season with a Christmas program by the two's, three's and four's classrooms on December 19 for their peers and parents. The children performed classic Christmas carols and a few new ones.

Also in December, parents hosted a teacher luncheon for all teachers at CWEP. This was a great way for all staff to fellowship and celebrate the holidays.

The staff at CWEP hoped everyone had a safe and happy holidays.

Holly Grissom, Director
Children's Weekday Education
Program

Tax Help

Christian Brothers University is sponsoring free tax preparation and electronic filing for families earning less than \$42,000 per year. IRS trained students and alumni from CBU will prepare basic tax returns.

Please bring the following items: Photo ID, Social Security cards and birth dates for all individuals on the return, W-2 and 1099 forms, total paid for day care and the day care provider's tax identifying number and a copy of last year's return if available.

This service will be available at the cafeteria in Memphis Catholic High School located at 61 N. McLean on January 24 & 31 and February 7 & 14 from 9 am – noon.

MJMRC Library Corner

The Library Staff would like to thank all those who have so graciously donated books, video tapes, DVD's and money for the purchase of books during 2008.

We are truly blessed with thoughtful and caring members. Thank you again for your generosity.

Carol Henderson
Librarian

Please send address
changes to:

TOGETHER
200 E. Parkway, N.
Memphis, TN
38112-5414