"We also, before the temptation comes, think we can walk upon the sea, but when the winds blow, we feel ourselves begin to sink. Hence such a time is rightly said to be a time to try us, or to find out what we are, and is there no good in this? Is it not this that rightly rectifies our judgment about ourselves, that makes us to know ourselves, that tends to cut off those superfluous sprigs of pride and self-conceitedness, wherewith we are subject to be overcome? Is not such a day, the day that bends us, humbleth us, and that makes us bow before God, for our faults committed in our prosperity? and yet doth it yield no good unto us? We could not live without such turnings of the hand of God upon us. We should be overgrown with flesh, if we had not our seasonable winters. It is said that in some countries trees will grow, but will bear no fruit, because there is no winter there."

- John Bunyan, Seasonable Counsel: or, Advice to Sufferers
the now ex-youth leader came to his car window, said hello, and with a single blow took take of my dad's front teeth. Father came home with teeth in his hand, but the church was revitalized. I'm just saying, next time you redistribute power, cover your mouth. (Also important, while we are on this point, here are 3 phrases that should raise some red flags if you hear them: "I've got your back." "I'm so glad you're our pastor." "Hello, can you roll down your window please?")

- **Maybe they like it this way:** This one is very simple, but often overlooked. Have you stopped to think that maybe some of your members actually prefer their church small? They may have been there when you said how much you wanted the church to grow, but they didn't really hear it. That is why it is so important to understand that the clearer the vision, the smaller the chance of friction later.

But church growth is non-negotiable. The only question is how to get people to really want to add to their number, not just say they want to.

Discuss this article on our Facebook page

**Communications & Media**

**What's Your Reputation? Part 1:**
Dealing with on-the-spot social media

*By Rajkumar Dixit*

Do you wonder what people are saying about your organization? What kind of reputation do you have?

The current trend in social media is to "check-in" from wherever you are, offering tips or critiques. For example, if you were at the Olive Garden you would check-in using Facebook's Places application, or the FourSquare application that aggregates your information to Twitter. You can write about the quality of service, give menu suggestions to try, or a particular waiter to avoid.

That means that the power to shape your reputation is with the user/consumer, which is why more companies are devoting their time on social media sites to see what others are saying about them.

This is very serious business, because social media users hold incredible power to give credit or to discredit a company. Last year, because of Arizona's controversial immigration law, activists organized a boycott asking companies and individuals to halt all plans to visit the state, potentially causing economic damage. The State Tourism office of Arizona failed miserably to engage with them.

Caught up in the upheaval was Arizona Ice Tea, who became a target because of their brand name. Unlike Arizona (the state), Arizona Iced Tea company quickly struck back to potential boycotters by explaining they were headquartered in Long Island, NY.

Churches and church organizations can check their reputation by carefully trolling the Internet to see how they are perceived.

**Next Best Practices: What's Your Reputation, part 2: How to Protect Your Brand**

Rajkumar Dixit is a pastor, and the author of Branded Faith: Contextualizing the Gospel in a Post-Secular World. You can read more at rajkumardixit.com.

**Media**

Communication and Technology--Troy McQueen, communications specialist for British Columbia recently presented this seminar in his conference. Part one entitled Reaching the Next Billion includes:

- All Roads Lead to Rome
- Interesting internet statistics
- Why people use the internet
- 4 popular social networking websites
- Google & Facebook Ads
- 6 free online tools for ministry
- 8 Adventist Smartphone Apps

Salty Christians--Jose Rojas leads off on the first NAD Viewpoints devotional. George Johnson, Communication Director for the NAD hopes to feature a member of the NAD every other week in these five minute devotional videos. You can find the links in the weekly NADNewsPoints newsletter. NADNewsPoints replaces Friday Fax.
Reading for Pastors

Do small groups work, or is their effectiveness overhyped? Brian Jones thinks it's time we euthanize the concept.

Quote: "Small groups are things that trick us into believing we're serious about making disciples. The problem is 90 percent of small groups never produce one single disciple. Ever. They help Christians make shallow friendships, for sure. They're great at helping Christians feel a tenuous connection to their local church, and they do a bang-up job of teaching Christians how to act like other Christians in the Evangelical Christian subculture. But when it comes to creating the kind of holistic disciples Jesus envisioned, the jury's decision came back a long time ago-small groups just aren't working."

Fishers of men or keepers of the aquarium? Quote: "The people you're trying to reach aren't interested in the church that has been created by the people you're trying to keep. If they were, they'd be coming. But they're not....If the mark of Christian maturity is a bunch of people who want to create a museum glorifying and preserving their personal preferences and then sanctify it by calling it a church, count me out."

Some taxpayers think you're freeloding on the community. Though it faces an uphill battle, demonstrators are asking the Texas state legislature to tax the wealthiest churches. Quote: "Texas mega-churches... have the ease of marketing that some corporations have, so we feel that they and other successful mega-churches could help with public education too. We've proposed just a 1% tax on profits taken in by just the top 1% of the most profitable mega-churches and televangelists in Texas. They can easily afford it.

One good argument would be that our churches have economic value to the community even if we are tax exempt. If someone did this kind of audit on your church, how much value would they find?

Of the top 25 denominations in the United States, only five report growth last year.

More on the changing face of marriage: there's less stigma to "living in sin." (I'm totally puzzled by the concept of having a wedding several years after you're married and have children.)

Should you be warned before you buy a Christian book that it may challenge your faith? For several years, Lifeway thought you should. But not anymore.

From the "we should have done this, and now they're doing it" department: Rick Warren initiates health reform at Saddleback, and loses 8 pounds.

To my way of thinking, an encouraging sign from the pro-life forces: rather than demonizing the other side, cooperate with them to make abortion less common.

To the Point

The worst moment for the atheist is when he is really thankful and has nobody to thank.
- Dante Gabriel Rossetti

What we become depends on what we read after all of the professors have finished with us. The greatest university of all is a collection of books.
- Thomas Carlyle

The best doctor in the world is the veterinarian. He can't ask his patients what is the matter - he's got to just know.
- Will Rogers

Never be afraid to laugh at yourself, after all, you could be missing out on the joke of the century.
- Dame Edna Everage

Acting is merely the art of keeping a large group of people from coughing.
- Sir Ralph Richardson

Ask yourself whether you are happy and you cease to be so.
- John Stuart Mill

It is easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend.
- William Blake

You don't get anything clean without getting something else dirty.
- Cecil Baxter

Those who believe in telekinetics, raise my hand
- Kurt Vonnegut

Let's have some new cliches.
- Samuel Goldwyn

Suburbia is where the developer bulldozes out the trees, then names the streets after them.
- Bill Vaughan

I have only one superstition. I touch all the bases when I hit a home run.
- Babe Ruth
Parents, Educators, Supervisors, & Ministry Leaders Invited to Attend IGNITION
Discover key principles for working and ministering with today’s young adults at IGNITION Summit, April 4-6, 2011, Dallas/Ft. Worth, TX. Dr. Tim Elmore, president of Growing Leaders, will be among the featured presenters. To register and for more information, follow www.IGNITIONblog.wordpress.com.

Humor: Really, really awkward questions about Jesus.

Humor: Facebook is like prison.

Previous resource links:
- Andrews Study Bible
- Branded Faith, by Rajkumar Dixit
- Matt Gamble, VagaBondservant ministry
- The Hope of Survivors, ministry to victims of pastoral sexual abuse
- iFollow website
- Dissertation on house churches from Milton Adams
- NAD NewsPoints (formerly Friday Fax) by email, or on a web page.
- A way to block time-wasting web sites

Got a tool, resource, site, article, idea or seminar that you like a lot? Share it with us at BestPractices@ameritech.net.

Upcoming NAD Events

Do you have an event you’d like to invite NAD pastors to? Send details to BestPractices@Ameritech.net.


Andrews University Music & Worship Conference. Mar 24, 2011 - Mar 26, 2011, Andrews University, 100 US 31 Highway, Berrien Springs, MI 49104. The eighth annual Andrews University Music and Worship Conference. If you’re interested in exploring worship and worship music in ways that are theologically profound, practical, and inspiring, you will definitely want to join us. Sponsored by the NAD Church Resource Center and Andrews University's Department of Music, Department of Christian Ministry and Center for Youth Evangelism. Phone: 800-968-8428 x4 or 269-471-8352. For more information, email: worshipconference@andrews.edu.

United Youth Congress 2011 - iServe. Apr 6, 2011 - Apr 9, 2011, Orange County Convention Center, 9860 Universal Blvd, Orlando, FL 32819. Youth, young adults, youth leaders and parents/chaperones are invited to attend. We will have inspiring worship, training seminars, service projects in the community, an evening at Universal Studios, Saturday night concert, recreation, and much more! This package includes hotel and meals. For those who do not want hotel and meals, click here. For Sabbath Only. click here. Phone: 800-732-7587. For more information, email: events@adventsource.org.

From Walt Williams, Andrews University InMinistry Center Director, the list of Spring 2011 InMinistry intensive classes for each union - April 3-14

STANDOUT. Apr 15, 2011 - Apr 17, 2011, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI. STANDOUT is a spiritual retreat for high school students, hosted on the campus of Andrews University. Throughout two days of spiritual exercises and group activities, we’ll challenge you to tap into the amazing power of God so that you will STANDOUT and set your faith in motion! Phone: 269-471-6372. For more information, email: standout@andrews.edu.


Best Practices is a Vervent publication of NAD CHURCH RESOURCE CENTER. Editor: Loren Seibold, Ohio Conference. E-mail: Best Practices. You are free to republish pieces from Best Practices in your own newsletter or blog, with attribution to the Best Practices newsletter and the author of the piece.

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A Few Years Ago I Brought in a Nationally Recognized Pastor to Do Some Consulting for Our Church. One of the Things I Remember Most About My Time with Him Was a Side Conversation We Had About Small Groups.

"I Haven't Really Figured Out the Small Group Thing," I Confessed to Him.

"Well, Brian, That's Because They Don't Work. Small Groups Are Things That Trick Us into Believing We're Serious About Making Disciples. The Problem Is 90 Percent of Small Groups Never Produce One Single Disciple. Ever. They Help Christians Make Shallow Friendships, for Sure. They're Great at Helping Christians Feel a Tenuous Connection to Their Local Church, and They Do a Bang-Up Job of Teaching Christians How to Act Like Other Christians in the Evangelical Christian Subculture. But When It Comes to Creating the Kind of Holistic Disciples Jesus Envisioned, the Jury's Decision Came Back a Long Time Ago—Small Groups Just Aren't Working."

"Finally," I Said, "I've Met Someone Who's Got the Guts to Euthanize This Small Group Sacred Cow."

I Have Been Leading, Participating In, Championing, and Applauding the Efforts of Small Groups for the Last 20 Years of My Ministry.

But Now I'm Done. In My Opinion, They Just Don't Work. Let Me Share Why.

A Flawed Starting Point

Church-Initiated "Small Groups" Begin from a Flawed Starting Point.

For Reasons That Still Escape Me, Soon After Becoming a Christian at Age 18, Deron Brickey, Dave Polonia, Jeff Snyder, and I Started Hanging Out with One Another.

Soon That Group Grew to 10 to 12 Friends. We Laughed Together, Prayed Together, Studied the Bible Together, Ate Together, Evangelized Together, and Served the Poor Together. Even Though We Had No Leader, No Real Set Meeting Time, No Agenda, and No Plan or Focus, It Was Through These Friends That I Made Incredible Strides Toward Becoming a Holistic Disciple of Jesus.

And It All Happened by Accident.

In Fact, Looking Back on My 25 Years of Following Christ, Here's What I've Noticed: Every Small Group I've Ever Been in That Helped Me Grow as a Disciple Started by What Appeared to Be an Accident.

I Wasn't Looking for It. I Wasn't Interested in Joining a Small Group in the Least. And in Many Respects, I Didn't Even Feel a Need to Grow Spiritually.

Most of All, I Wasn't Participating in Some Superficial Churchwide Small Group Sign-Up Initiative the Senior Pastor Dreamed Up to Jack Up Small Group Attendance Because He Heard Church Analysts Say You Should Always Maintain a Certain Ratio of Worship Attendees to Small Group Participants.

It Just Happened, Naturally and Spontaneously.

Those Experiences Couldn't Have Been Planned, Even If I Tried. And for the Most Part, That's Exactly How It's Been Happening in the Christian Community For, Say, I Don't Know, the Last 1,960 Years. That Is Until We Westerners, Particularly Americans, Started Messing It Up.

Well-Intentioned Christians, Armed with the Latest Insights in Organizational Theory, Let Their Pragmatic and Utilitarian Hearts Delude Them into Thinking They Could Organize, Measure, and Control the Mystical Working of the Holy Spirit in Community in Order to Consistently Reproduce Disciples in Other Contexts.

Then These People Started Writing Books and Hosting Seminars. And Then Church Leaders Like You and...
me bought into what they were saying because we didn’t recognize that the same faulty worldview
that produced a mechanized approach to Christian community fostered a ready-made market in our
hearts to consume their quick-fix solutions.

So we came home, armed with our “101 Sure-Fire Discussion Starter” books and binders full of slick
recruitment techniques, and started small group ministries at our churches.

We preached powerful sermons. We cast vision. We contorted Acts 2 into saying what we needed it
to say. We blathered on and on about all the “one anothers” in the Bible and about how, if we met
one time a week for 1.5 hours and followed a well-conceived discussion regime, we could experience
Acts 2 in all of its splendor and glory.

And what happened? You know what happened. They failed. Like big-time.

And meanwhile, while our people were constrained by their obligation to the church and their sense
of loyalty to us as leaders, their hearts searched for real community and an opportunity to grow as
disciples.

What would happen if we euthanized all of our small groups, taught the value of discipleship and
community, and then simply let the Holy Spirit do his work?

Achilles’ Heel

When I attended my very first church growth conference in 1992, a nationally known small group
“expert” stood up and said, “The way we say it at our church is, ‘If you can read, you can lead.’ If a
Christian can read the questions in our study guide, he can lead a small group at our church.”

That’s easy, I thought. Too easy, in fact. And ridiculous.

“If you can read, you can lead” is a great slogan for people who organize a rugby team from your
church, or your knitting circle, or the Saturday morning llama-riding group. But not for someone
recognized by the community of faith as a mentor of new disciples.

The Achilles’ heel of the modern-day small group movement is simple: Small groups don’t create
disciples; disciples create disciples. And modern-day small groups are led, for the most part, by
people who have attended the church, had a conversion experience, led a reasonably moral life, and
can read the study-guide questions, but are not disciples themselves.

American churches have lowered the bar of small group leadership to an absurd level. In fact, it’s so
ridiculous most churches would be better off not even having small groups than to offer them with
leaders who aren’t disciples.

The common argument against small groups is flawed. The problem with small groups isn’t that they
pool the group’s collective ignorance; it’s that they pool the group’s collective disobedience. And it’s
not the small group leader’s fault.

It’s the fault of the people who installed the leader and convinced him he could lead their group to a
place where they themselves have not gone.

Jesus in Your Group?

Would Jesus join a small group in your church?

Think about that for a moment. Forget about your goals. Forget about your motivations for offering
them. Forget about all the supposed benefits of participating in one. Do you honestly think Jesus
would join, lead, or start a small group within the existing structure of your small group’s ministry at
your church?

Of course not. Not a chance. Not in a million years.

Why?

Because while your people are stuck in the “hairball” of your church’s ministry (to steal Gordon
MacKenzie’s great line), Jesus would be out rubbing shoulders with people in your community,
helping them find their way back to God, and teaching them to obey his teachings.

Jesus would actually be doing what small groups say they want/should/need to be doing, but they
can’t, because they’re too busy being a “small group” inside the confines of your small group’s
ministry infrastructure.
It’s like a jogging class where the instructor, instead of taking his class jogging and commenting on technique while class members actually are jogging, stuffs everyone into a classroom and lectures to them three days a week and then gives them a final exam.

Disciples are created “out there.” Small groups, if not by their definition, definitely by their practice, all occur “in here.”

With few exceptions, modern-day small groups are great at producing:

- Christians who sit in circles and talk to one another inside a building
- people who read and comment on the Bible
- people who rant about how they long to “get out there” and do something that matters
- people who awkwardly end their time by praying for “prayer requests”
- people who go home unchallenged and unchanged.

You would think there’s a Small Groups Revised Version of the New Testament somewhere. And I quote: “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore stay where you are and make Christians of the people you already know, baptizing them in the name of American consumer Christianity, and teaching them to sit in rooms with one another, read the Bible, and pray for one another. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age’” (Matthew 28:18-20, SGRV).

If the Small Groups Revised Version of Matthew 28:18-20 were the stated purpose, then most American small groups would be nailing it.

In my humble opinion, the Americanized small group is a remnant of an impotent religious institution that can’t transition effectively into a post-Christian, postmodern world.

Thank God small groups worked in some instances, and in some contexts!

But for every story of success about a small group creating an authentic disciple, my hunch is there are three times as many failures (and that just takes into account the 10 to 30 percent of church attendees who actually participate in them).

If we had time to waste, this wouldn’t be an urgent problem.

But we don’t.

Brian Jones is founding pastor of Christ’s Church of the Valley in Royersford, Pennsylvania. He’s the author of Second Guessing God and Getting Rid of the Gorilla: Confessions on the Struggle to Forgive. See www.brianjones.com[1].

Have an Opinion? Share an Opinion!

We welcome readers’ submissions to this feature, “In Opinions, Liberty.” Tell us how you feel about an issue, idea, or practice in today’s church. Submit your 1,000 to 1,400-word essay to christianstandard@standardpub.com[2]. Put “Opinion” in the subject line.
**Fishers of men, not keepers of the aquarium**

Monday February 7th, 2011 – [Permalink](http://www.stevenfurtick.com/leadership/keepers-of-the-aquarium/) | Leadership, Ministry Perspective

Share This:

People ask me all the time how we’ve been able to see so many people come to Christ in five years.

Outside of the favor of God, I could give you a lot of specifics. Tell you a lot of things that we’ve done. But none of it will help you until you make a decision we made in the early days of our church.

And that was the decision to be more focused on the people we’re trying to reach than on the people we’re trying to keep. As others have said, to be fishers of men, not just keepers of the aquarium.

We’re not going to cater to the personal preferences of the few in our pursuit of the salvation of the many.

And that includes if the few is ten people when we’re pursuing one hundred. Or 5,000 when we’re pursuing 10,000. Or 10,000 when we’re pursuing 20,000.

Most people and churches aren’t willing to do that. They’re keepers of the aquarium. They say they want to reach people, but in reality they’re more focused on preservation than expansion. On keeping people rather than reaching them.

They let saved people dictate style. Saved people dictate focus. Saved people dictate vision.

The result is a room full of saved people. Not people getting saved. Why? Because the people you’re trying to reach aren’t interested in the church that has been created by the people you’re trying to keep. If they were, they’d be coming. But they’re not.

For some reason, right here is where people usually play the discipleship card. They’re trying to disciple the people they’re trying to keep. They accuse you of pitting evangelism against discipleship.

But that isn’t the case. I just believe true disciples should care more about making disciples than freeze framing the church the way it was when they became one. Or wanting twenty-six programs customized to their liking. If the mark of Christian maturity is a bunch of people who want to create a museum glorifying and preserving their personal preferences and then sanctify it by calling it a church, count me out.

Some people say why can’t we have both? You can. Focus on the people you want to reach and you’ll keep the people you want to keep. Let the rest walk. They’ll find a church elsewhere to graze.

The way I see it is they’re just occupying the space of a person who needs to hear the gospel. You’ll fill their seat.

And it will be with the person who needs it the most.

Resource of the Day: The idea above is found in one of basic tenants of Elevation’s Code.
our roadmap for pursuing our vision of seeing people far from God be filled with life in Christ. To view the whole code, click
Demonstrations at Texas Capitol for Church Taxes to Support Education

PICKET AT TEXAS CAPITOL DEMANDS CHURCH TAX TO SUPPORT PUBLIC EDUCATION

They’re going to be out there every weekday in front of the Texas Capitol Building in Austin, Texas: and they’re demanding that lawmakers begin levying a small tax on the wealthy churches of the Lone Star State in order to rescue public education.

The project is the brainchild of American Atheists State Director Joe Zamecki. Joe and a coterie of fellow activists hope to draw attention to the “war on public schools” that is taking place throughout the state. Indeed, every time the legislature huddles in Austin, there is a flurry of bills that would further erode the public education system, and undermine the quality of education in the classrooms.

Mr. Zamecki explains in the following announcement...

Public education in Texas is in a financial crisis. This year’s state legislature is about to slash spending on education, to include the laying off of possibly hundreds of teachers, and the closing of public schools all over the state. Apparently the state budget is short this year, by billions of dollars.

Right now, parents, students, teachers and others are rallying around their schools, and speaking out about the very real need to keep the teachers and schools we have now, as one of our state’s top priorities.

Meanwhile mega-churches and televangelists in Texas are doing very well. So the recurring theme of church taxation is in the air again, although it’s still a somewhat shocking idea to most people. Not so shocking as in the past.

Joel Osteen’s Lakewood Church alone is doing famously well, operating in the physically largest church building in the USA, tax free. Like so many Texas mega-churches, Joel and his church have the ease of marketing that some corporations have, so we feel that they and other successful mega-churches could help with public education too. We’ve proposed just a 1% tax on profits taken in by just the top 1% of the most profitable mega-churches and televangelists in Texas. They can easily afford it.

Not the small, poor churches we hear about so much. This is not an idea to harm or hinder any churches in their operations. We feel that giving churches blanket tax-exempt status is giving them a special privilege. The overwhelming financial success of some of those churches has some economists standing in awe. The idea isn’t new, and it isn’t going away, as long as Texas’ children have a grossly inferior system of education, a financial balance like this is needed.

Studies show that our state is lagging behind in education very badly, and knowing that the current legislature with the Texas governor are working hard together, it’s clear that spending cuts will happen before any tax increases or new taxes are implemented. So without that normal financial balance, Texans are considering alternatives. This is one idea for an alternative that could solve the issue of insufficient tax funds.

As unusual and unpopular as this type of idea is, it just needs to be said again, loudly. And for those who feel that a church tax would invite churches and religious activists into the public schools, the legislature, and other areas of secular government existence: too late. They’re already well established in those institutions, which is one reason why we have a state/church separation movement. They just need to pay their admission fee, finally. It would really help the people of Texas.

Atheists and other state/church separationists will be picketing the 2011 Texas State Legislature each weekday at 1 p.m. CST for the next few weeks, while the legislature works out a state budget. Our short and sweet message is: “Don’t close a SINGLE school! TAX THE CHURCHES!”

Who: Joe Zamecki, Texas State Director for American Atheists

What: An ongoing picket project, of the 2011 Texas State Legislature

When: Every weekday at 1 p.m., until further notice

Where: The front gate of the Texas State Capitol building, at 11th Street and Congress Ave., in Austin

Why: To vocally offer up the idea to replenish tax revenue for education in Texas by creating a small tax on the most profitable mega-churches and televangelists in Texas.

MORE INFO: Contact Joe Zamecki at jzamecki@atheists.org or (512) 758-0060

This entry was posted on Thursday, February 10th, 2011 at 18:00 and is filed under Uncategorized. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.
A study asks: What's a church's economic worth? - Philly.com

February 01, 2011 | By David O'Reilly, Inquirer Staff Writer

What is the dollar value of a marriage saved? A suicide averted? An addiction conquered? A teenager taught right from wrong?

In short: What is a church's economic worth to the community it serves?

Last summer, a University of Pennsylvania professor and a national secular research group based in Center City took up that seemingly unanswerable question. With a list they devised of 54 value categories, they attempted to calculate the economic "halo effect" of a dozen religious congregations in Philadelphia - 10 Protestant churches, a Catholic parish, and a synagogue.

They added up the money generated by weddings and funerals, festivals, counseling programs, preschools, elder care. They tallied the salaries of staff and the wages of roofers, plumbers, even snow shoveler. They put dollar signs on intangibles, too, such as helping people find work and teaching children to be socially responsible.

They even measured the diameter of trees on church campuses.

The grand total for the 12 congregations: $50,577,098 in annual economic benefits.

The valuation for 300-member Gloria Dei (Old Swedes') Episcopal Church in Queen Village, for instance, was a middle-of-the-road $1.65 million. By contrast, the figure for Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic parish in Kensington, with 7,000 congregants, a parochial school, and a community center, was $22.44 million.

The numbers, culled from clergy and staff interviews, "just blew us away," said Robert Jaeger, executive director of the research group Partners for Sacred Places.

The study is not yet published. When it is, the robust sums are likely to be challenged, predicted lead author Ram Cnaan, a Penn professor of social policy.

Some valuations were drawn from existing academic research, such as $19,600 for pastoral counseling that prevents a suicide and $18,000 for an averted divorce. Cnaan himself arrived at other values - for example, $375 on "teaching pro-social values" to a young child.

"Look, it's quite possible that someone will say we calculated all wrong" in some categories, he said. But, he added, he welcomed scrutiny.

He and the 21-year-old Partners have well-established reputations in the valuation of houses of worship. In 1998 they began a landmark research series on urban congregations' services to the poor (worth an annual average of $140,000). It led George W. Bush in 2000 to create the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives, which continues in the Obama administration.

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Marketing Research 2.0
Learn how 8 leading brands use marketing research in this webinar.

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A study asks: What's a church's economic worth? - Philly.com

http://articles.philly.com/2011-02-01/news/27092987_1_partners-for-sac...
A study asks: What's a church's economic worth?

February 01, 2011|By David O'Reilly, Inquirer Staff Writer

The 150-member Summit Presbyterian Church in Mount Airy's "halo…

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Some valuations were drawn from existing academic research, such as $19,600 for pastoral counseling that prevents a suicide and $18,000 for an averted divorce. Cnaan himself arrived at other values - for example, $375 on "teaching pro-social values" to a young child.

"Look, it's quite possible that someone will say we calculated all wrong" in some categories, he said. But, he added, he welcomed scrutiny.

He and the 21-year-old Partners have well-established reputations in the valuation of houses of worship. In 1998 they began a landmark research series on urban congregations' services to the poor (worth an annual average of $140,000). It led George W. Bush in 2000 to create the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives, which continues in the Obama administration.

If there are challenges to the "halo" study, they are not likely to come from churches, which stand to benefit.

"Equipped with such measurements," the report said, "a congregation could produce hard numbers to show community organizations, policy makers and potential funders the value of its local presence."

Among the churches in the study was 150-member Summit Presbyterian in Mount Airy, where last week the Rev. Cheryl Pyrch stood in the snow and pointed to a row of DayGlo orange dots climbing the stone bell tower.

Each spot marked where masons soon would drill iron reinforcing rods to keep the tower from cracking further - a job that will pump $50,000 into the economy. Summit's century-old slate roof is also "coming to the end of its useful life," Pyrch said. The estimated cost of replacing it is $250,000, a windfall for a contractor.

Summit's operating budget is a modest $265,000. But the study calculated its "halo" last year at $1.47 million.
It is home to a remarkable array of community organizations, including a day-care center, a chamber orchestra, a synagogue, a dance and drum ensemble, a computer company, a dance school, a martial arts program.

It also rents space to the Adult Congenital Heart Association for its national headquarters. "It's almost as if this [church] is a small-business incubator," said Tim Clair, an association director.

On the other side of the city, the Rev. Bruce Lewandowski said the study changed his perception of his Visitation BVM parish.

"You might think of your church as an employer," he said, "but not as an engine driving the neighborhood economy."

Founded in the late 19th century for Kensington's Irish population, it now serves primarily Latinos and Vietnamese. He discovered that many of his congregants stay in the neighborhood long after Sunday Mass, patronizing Asian stores and restaurants.

Lewandowski thinks of Visitation as three institutions: the church, the 480-pupil school, and the Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua Community Center. "Our mission is not just to get people into heaven," he said, "but help them maneuver through the trials and troubles of life."

The community center is home to dozens of sports teams and civic groups. At night, it becomes a refuge for prostitutes plying their trade along Kensington Avenue.

If he can acquire a vacant bank building nearby, the pastor said, it will become a 60-unit senior housing center.

In West Philadelphia, Calvary Methodist Church reported helping 100 people find employment last year. With each job valued at $14,500, the category alone added $1.45 million to its $2.6 million halo.

Not all the categories proved net positives, however. The researchers found, for instance, that crime rates near eight of the churches were higher than in tracts several blocks away.

And measuring the congregations' impact on property values backfired for St. Luke's and the Epiphany Church in Center City, where adjacent real estate values were lower than in nearby neighborhoods. While that could not be pinned on the handsome church's presence, the category put St. Luke's halo into negative territory: minus $226,000.

Tuomi Forrest, Partners' associate director and a coauthor of the report, said he and Cnaan were pondering how to make real estate a more accurate metric. But he defended the overall findings: "No one in any field has ever tried to compile so many ways to calculate" the value of congregations."
The study shows the contribution of religious congregations "to be 20 to 30 times bigger than we knew," said director Jaeger. It "will give congregations dozens of new ways to articulate their value, broaden their constituencies, and survive and grow."

The 'Halo' Effect

The economic "halo" effect of 12 Philadelphia congregations:

**Visitation Blessed Virgin Mary,** Kensington $22,440,382

**Congregation Rodeph Shalom,** North Philadelphia 7,969,884

**First Baptist,** Center City 6,090,032

**Mother Bethel A.M.E.,** Center City 3,188,685

**Calvary Methodist,** West Philadelphia 2,597,359

**Arch Street United Methodist,** Center City 1,871,621

**Shiloh Baptist,** Center City: 1,656,456

**Gloria Dei Episcopal,** Queen Village 1,646,469

**Summit Presbyterian,** Mount Airy 1,465,327

**Jones Tabernacle A.M.E.,** North Philadelphia 1,126,231

**St. Mary's Episcopal,** University City 750,244

**St. Luke's and the Epiphany,** Center City -225,595

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Only five of top 25 U.S. churches report membership growth, says study

Written by Kimberlee Hauss
Thursday, 18 February 2010 22:09

(ENI/RNS)–U.S. membership has increased in the Roman Catholic Church - the nation's largest Christian body - but the No. 2 Southern Baptist Convention, along with most traditional Protestant denominations, reported continuing decline, according to new figures released by the National Council of Churches.

Both the Southern Baptists and Catholics reported membership losses in 2009’s Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches; in the 2010 edition released on February 12, however, only the Catholics reported a rebound, with a 1.5 percent growth rate, to more than 68 million members.

Southern Baptists held on to the No. 2 spot, at 16.3 million members, but that figure represented a 0.2 percent drop from 2009 and the second consecutive year of decline. The Presbyterian Church (USA) experienced the greatest loss among the top 10 denominations (3.3 percent), down to 2.8 million members.

The NCC’s annual Yearbook is regarded as one of the most reliable recorders of church membership in North America. The figures, from 2008, are the most recent figures compiled. However, 11 out of the 25 largest churches did not report updated figures.

Eileen W. Lindner, editor of the Yearbook since 1998, said many experts cite "an increasing secularization of American postmodern society, and its disproportional impact on liberal religious groups" as the cause of decline in some American churches.

Jack Haberer, editor of the independent The Presbyterian Outlook magazine, said the trend has been long in coming, prompted by Baby Boomers who went off to college and confronted "the Beatles and rock 'n' roll and post-Vietnam distrust of bureaucracies and a kind of an anti-traditionalist youth movement."

"Baby Boomers who are also Christians, in general, have been drawn more to churches that are more informal, less institutional, and more rock 'n' roll-ish," Haberer said. "Presbyterians and other mainline denominations have been very slow in reading those trends and thinking through a way to accommodate without compromising the theological integrity."

In an accompanying essay on "The New Immigrant Church," Lindner said waves of immigrants have helped combat the effects of secularization and led to a membership boost for some churches, especially among Pentecostals.

"In an era in which we have come to expect the inevitable advance of secularism in the U.S., the influx of robust Christian communities among new immigrants once again amends the topographical map of the religious landscape," Lindner writes in the Yearbook.

While some congregations are no doubt shrinking, the Yearbook reports total church membership was up 0.5 percent in 2008, to 147.4 million members. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) reported membership growth of 1.7 percent, to 5.9 million members. The Assemblies of God is the only other church in the 10 largest denominations to post an increase in size, up 1.3 percent, to 2.9 million.

While overall membership may be increasing, only five of the top 25 churches in the nation are growing, according to the Yearbook.

The 10 largest Christian bodies remain unchanged from last year's list, with one exception. The Assemblies of God moved up a notch, to the No. 9 spot, switching places with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which now finishes last on the Top 10 list.

The 10 largest Christian bodies reported in the 2010 yearbook are:

1. The Catholic Church: 68.1 million, up 1.49 percent.
2. Southern Baptist Convention: 16.2 million, down 0.24 percent.
3. The United Methodist Church: 7.8 million (U.S.), down 0.98 percent.
4. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: 5.9 million (U.S.), up 1.71 percent.
5. The Church of God in Christ: 5.5 million, no change.
7. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: 4.6 million, down 1.62 percent.
8. National Baptist Convention of America, Inc.: 3.5 million, no change.

9. Assemblies of God: 2.9 million, up 1.27 percent.

10. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): 2.8 million, down 3.28 percent.
Suzanne Nicholas and Donny Frate share six children, one St. Helena home with a porch overlooking the Spottswoode vineyards, and daily diaper-changing duties, but they have no intention of getting married.

“For me, I don’t feel like I need the approval of society or government to be with the woman I want to be with,” Frate said, rubbing the knee of the woman he’s lived with for two years. “This is our commitment to each other.”

On the couch, three of their children from previous marriages watch “The Karate Kid, Part II” and eat pizza slices on wooden boards. Their 8-month-old Skylar, the one child they share biologically, attempts to crawl for the first time across their immaculate white carpet.

Nicholas, 42, and Frate, 52, are part of a growing number of parents in the U.S. and Napa County who remain unmarried. Vows have become optional for some families as the stigma of “living in sin” fades in mainstream America. For others, it’s a financial necessity to hold off on the wedding. And in some cases, parents aren’t given the choice to marry a partner who flees.

Whatever the cause, unmarried families are booming. The number of children born to unmarried parents in the U.S. grew tenfold in 70 years, from about 4 percent in 1940 to almost 40 percent in 2007, according to a study by The Future of Children.

And Americans have become more accepting of alternative families. Nearly 40 percent of people surveyed said marriage was obsolete, according to a poll by the Pew Research Center in 2008.

Whether parents are married matters far less to children than their level of commitment, said Jennifer Carlin, professor of psychology at Napa Valley College.

“As long as people are good, loving, committed parents, that’s what matters more than some government-sanctioned piece of paper,” Carlin said.

A financial choice

Often, parents' choice to marry is motivated by money or influenced by social class.

For Nicholas and Frate, marriage would neither hurt nor help their budget, they said. They would pay lower car insurance but higher income taxes if they were to wed. Nicholas pays about $50 more a year on car insurance because she checks “single” on her forms, she said.

But for Lisa Crist, 31, and Rob Runyon, 34, of Napa, marriage is simply unaffordable. Crist is an insulin-dependent diabetic with thyroid disease, and she would lose her Medi-Cal health insurance if she married Runyon. Their combined income wouldn’t be low enough to qualify.

“It was only when she got pregnant that we realized we couldn’t afford (marriage),” Runyon said.

On a recent morning, their two toddlers, Presley and Pieper Runyon, eat clementines from small bowls in their Napa home, and Runyon and Crist calculate the monthly costs of Crist’s health bills without Medi-Cal. They total more than $800.

“We want the kids to grow up saying we’re married,” Runyon said. “Some people say it’s a choice, but we’ve looked into it and we can’t afford it.”

It’s apparent that income affects the choice to marry. The decline in U.S. marriage has occurred along class lines. In 2008, 64 percent of college graduates were married, whereas 48 percent of those with only a high school diploma were wed, according to the Pew Center survey.

Low-income Napa mothers have trouble getting fathers to agree to marriage and paying for the ceremony, said case managers in the Healthy Moms and Babies department of Clinic Ole in Napa.
In 2009, about 43 percent of the pregnant patients in Healthy Moms and Babies were married.

“What we’re seeing is more people not getting married, and not interested in getting married,” said Dalia Hernandez, a bilingual case manager. “They’re focusing their resources, limited as they are, on the baby and not the wedding.”

‘The best for my son’

And then there are mothers who want to protect the baby from its own father.

“Christie,” of Napa, said she got pregnant with her baby during her three-month stint working as a prostitute in San Francisco, Santa Rosa and Napa at age 18.

Christie asked that her real name be withheld to protect the identity of her 7-month-old child.

Now 19, Christie decided to raise the child by herself in a square cinder-block house she shares with her mother and two siblings in downtown Napa rather than stay with the pimp who impregnated her.

“He’s not a good person,” said Christie, who now works at a local retail store for $8 an hour, a meager sum compared to the $200 an hour she earned as a prostitute. “I’d rather have the best for my son,” she said.

On a recent morning, she laughed as her baby chased her Chihuahua off an ottoman covered with laundry. If it weren’t for her son, Christie would still be turning tricks, she said.

When she was still a sex worker, the father of her child tried to get her pregnant without her knowledge.

“He tried to trap me,” she said, showing a flash of her tongue ring. “He wanted me to be his ho.”

She wants to get married eventually, but doesn’t want to rush things. The man she’s dating now is going through a divorce.

Ultimately, she wants what’s best for her child. “I want a family,” she said. “I don’t want different guys around my son. I want him to have a father.”

‘Living in sin’

Remaining unmarried has its social costs as well.

Runyon and Crist haven’t been able to settle on a church where they wouldn’t receive disapproving glances, they said.

“They look at me like, ‘Oh, you’re living in sin,’” Crist said. She hasn’t returned to the church she grew up attending every Sunday.

“The biggest one is my dad,” she said. “It’s like, ‘You’re going to hell.’ And going to church growing up, I feel the same way.”

The couple still wear wedding rings and tell coworkers they’re married. They plan to schedule the wedding in three years, after Crist finishes nursing school and finds a job with medical insurance.

How a city accepts unmarried parents depends on the culture, Prof. Carlin said.

Stigmas are “lessening certainly in mainstream Caucasian families. It’s still seen as a pretty taboo thing among Asian-American communities.”

Even happily unmarried parents deal with stigmas.

Nicholas and Frate said their coworkers aren’t sure if they should call them fiancés, boyfriend and girlfriend or husband and wife.

“When I was pregnant, some people would look me in the eye but not look down at my belly,” Nicholas said. “Even some of my family. Their beliefs are that if we’re not married, there are huge ramifications.”

Local religious leaders said they’ve noticed the trend of unmarried parents. Our culture is too “gun-shy” on commitment, said Senior Pastor Pete Shaw of Crosswalk Community Church in Napa.

“The danger with not having that kind of a covenant with a parent is it’s easier to cut and run,” Shaw said.
At the same time, “who am I to judge? I think God wants to help (unmarried parents) do the best they can.”

**To have and to help**

Nicholas and Frate don’t mind upsetting other people.

Their connection and its terms are between the two of them, they said.

Both had been married once before, and both left their partners. Their former spouses didn’t contribute enough to parenting and chores, they said, and Nicholas and Frate felt they had to take up the slack.

Not so today. They say this is the best relationship they’ve had because they divide chores evenly, and they’ve finally matured.

“We had our own life experiences, had our own personal development,” Nicholas said. “We’re confident and comfortable with who we are.”

**Out of wedlock**

But the couple does care what their children think. They plan to have an unofficial commitment ceremony this summer for their kids.

Nicholas Jeworowski, 9, Nicholas’ son, said it doesn’t make a difference to him either way. “It’s okay with me,” Jeworowski said. “He lets me watch rated-R movies.”

Other unmarried parents worry about how their relationship will affect their children’s opinions about sex.

Crist and Runyon don’t want their children to think of their parents as having children out of wedlock.

“I don’t want the kids to be confused later,” Crist said. “I don’t want them having sexual relations with everyone. Hopefully, they’ll wait until they’re married.”

**Generational thing**

Crist admits her parents’ marriage and divorce changed the way she thinks about relationships. She hesitated to fall in love with Runyon after she watched her parents separate, she said.

“Why get married to someone who could hurt you and break you?” she asks.

Friends of her same generation watched their parents separate, she said, and are cynical about marriage as a result. But in the end, Crist decided a lifelong commitment would work for her.

“Our generation, we hung out and partied longer; we lived a little bit,” she said. “So hopefully, we’re not going to have these mid-life crises.”

At only 19, ‘Christie’s’ family life as a child has influenced her choices as well, she said.

She grew up with a stepfather and discovered her biological dad didn’t care about her when she met him later in her life.

“It made me realize you don’t have to be blood-related to have a family,” she said.

She hopes her baby will think of the man she eventually marries as his own father.

For Nicholas and Frate, a Baby Boomer and Generation X-er, their commitment is strong but no guarantee.

“Is it going to last forever?” Nicholas asks. “I have no idea. You never have any idea.”
The Discerning Seller: LifeWay to Drop Warning Labels

The "Read with Discernment" program listed popular authors as "strictly for critical study or research."

Bob Smietana | posted 2/10/2011 09:31AM

LifeWay Christian Stores, the Southern Baptist-owned U.S. retailer, plans to drop its controversial "Read with Discernment" program.

The program, which began in 2007, listed popular authors such as Rob Bell, Donald Miller, Brian McLaren, and William Young, who the chain said "may have espoused thoughts, ideas, or concepts that could be considered inconsistent with historical evangelical theology." Such books, LifeWay said, are relevant "strictly for critical study or research to ... understand and develop responses to the diversity of religious thought in today's postmodern world."

At the LifeWay store in Franklin, Tennessee, the shelf featuring Young's *The Shack* had a warning label, while Miller's *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years* had a bookmark in it telling buyers to ask for more information at the checkout desk. (LifeWay representatives declined to tell a reporter why Miller's book was included in the program.)

Only a handful of titles received the warnings. Chris Rodgers, LifeWay's director of product standards and customer relations, said the retailer was trying to help buyers make good decisions. But the labels became more trouble than they were worth.

"We have been thinking about doing away with them for some time," he said. "They have kind of become irrelevant. We thought it would be helpful and it wasn’t."

The program became an ongoing target of criticism. The most recent round was sparked by an October blog post by Shaun Groves, a Christian musician and speaker. Groves got so annoyed by the warning he found on Miller's book in a LifeWay store that he walked out and bought the book at a nearby Barnes & Noble instead.

"LifeWay warns Miller's readers to exercise discernment because it believes his books to be inconsistent with historical evangelical theology in some way," he wrote, "yet instead of refusing to sell them, LifeWay chooses to profit from what it alleges to be heresy(ish)."

Groves, whose music is carried by LifeWay and who declined to be interviewed for this story, went on to say that Christians should read every book—not just Miller's—with discernment.

"I want you to know that everything I write might be wrong," he wrote. "Exercise discernment."

Dan Scott, senior pastor of Christ Church in Nashville, agrees, but thinks LifeWay had good intentions.

"I understand why they did it," he said. "They had to find a way to get some people off their back in order to be able to sell books."

Scott said the charismatic megachurch's bookstore stocks a number of authors whose views he disagrees with. But as long as the authors do not attack central Christian doctrines, the store can stock or order them. So Christ Church's store sells Miller and Young and has also sold McLaren.

Rodgers would not discuss specifics about what products LifeWay would or would not sell. He added that
LifeWay would not sell any product that violated core Baptist teachings: "We are not going to promote heresy."

Like most Christian retailers, the chain sells to a wide variety of believers, he said. Most are Protestants who agree on central Christian teaching about Jesus or the Resurrection, but may not agree on other theological principles.

"We've dealt with all kinds of churches, and every one has got an opinion," he said.

Rodgers said that he agrees with Groves: "We should all read everything with discernment."

Related Elsewhere:
Previous Christianity Today articles on Christian retail include:

- **Christian Retail Convention Sees Drop in Attendance** | Attendance dropped by one-fifth at this year's CBA convention of Christian retailers, the organization reported, as overall Christian retail sales plunged by more than 10 percent. (July 20, 2009)

- **How to Save the Christian Bookstore** | (Hint: Stop making it so religious.) (April 11, 2008)

- **Christian Bookstore Manager Martyred in Gaza City** | Rami Ayyad received death threats after store bombing in April. (October 8, 2007)

- **Mass Marketing the Good News** | Last fall on the outskirts of Birmingham in a strip mall between Morrison's cafeteria and Kinko's copy center, the state of the art in spiritual retailing opened its doors: Disciples, the first "Christian superstore." (January 8, 1996)
Rick Warren Loses 8 Pounds in Saddleback's Health Plan

Sun, Jan. 16, 2011 Posted: 11:34 AM EDT

Rick Warren has already shed several pounds in January by following a health plan that celebrity doctors helped launched at Saddleback Church on Saturday.

The megachurch pastor dropped 8 pounds since starting the Daniel Plan this year, said Dr. Mark Hyman, one of three developers of the 52-week, church-wide plan for the Saddleback family in southern California.

The Daniel Plan, based on the prophet Daniel who chose healthy eating instead of the king's rich foods, is part of the church's aim this year to get its parishioners physically healthier.

It is the first of several community programs that Saddleback will launch as part of its Decade of Destiny campaign over the next 10 years. The plan will address 7 key areas of life: spiritual, physical, financial, relational, vocational, emotional, and mental.

Around 6,000 people participated in the kick-off event of the Daniel Plan at the church's Lake Forest campus, while thousands more listened from satellite campuses and online.

The event featured lectures from Hyman, a metabolism expert, and Dr. Daniel Amen, a bestselling author and psychiatrist. Cardiologist Dr. Mehmet Oz wasn't able to join in person but recorded a video clip that was played for the audience.

"They have agreed not only to teach today but to work together to put together this Daniel Plan and monitor your progress all year," said Warren.

During his motivational speech, Amen, a Christian, said he was disappointed with the unhealthy eating habits that have become so pervasive in churches. On one Sunday before service, he noticed his church selling donuts, serving sausages, and grilling hot dogs.

"They have no idea they are sending people to heaven early."

"That's not that plan!" he said, drawing laughter from the crowd. "So many churches in America are killing people with the food they give."

Amen, who interspersed medical findings with biblical verses, said they shouldn't trash the body, which is the temple of God. He asked the audience to find a deeper motivation to join the program, noting that one of his motivations for staying healthy is his newborn grandson.

"He is more likely to go to heaven if he sees his grandfather is a man of God who can touch his life for a long period of time," said Amen.

"If you get healthy, you'll be able to serve your family, your loved ones, the body of Christ in a more effective way. [It is] not just for 10 pounds, but to get healthy for the rest of your life."

Hyman spoke about a "whole-systems approach" to health, a combination of nutritional eating, exercise and stress management used to bring the body back into balance.

An advocate of functional medicine, Hyman argued that the secret to health is as simple as eliminating the "bad stuff" and getting more of the "good stuff."

He said things that fall in the bad category include toxins, allergens, microbes, poor diet/lifestyle and stress.

Good things for the health of a person are: proper foods, nutrients, light, water, air, movement, sleep, rhythm, relaxation, love, community, meaning and connection.

By controlling these factors, Hyman said one can create health by controlling gene expression and the body's responses.

"The genes you can't change - they're fixed - but the way your genes turn on and off [you can]," he said.

Amen spoke about brain health as the key to a healthy life.

He asked those making a "covenant" to follow the Daniel Plan to incorporate social connections, new learning, great diet, omega-3 fats, multi-vitamin, green tea, deep breathing, gratitude, prayer, and 6 hours of sleep into their lifestyle.
Both Hyman and Amen also said their techniques would help with depression.

Dr. Oz spoke in a video message that was filmed from the studio of his talk show, The Dr. Oz Show. He said there are 5 big adjustments that the audience needs to make, which includes controlling blood pressure, stopping smoking, exercising for 30 minutes a day, eating healthy, and managing stress.

Participants of the Daniel Plan received a chance to get their health measurements in stations around the church campus.

Warren and the doctors encouraged them to create a profile on the plan's website and track their weekly progress. They also said they could opt to lend their results to a medical study that will be conducted along with the plan.

The Saddleback pastor has pledged to lose 90 pounds through the program. He said he has gained 3 pounds each year since he started the church nearly 30 years ago.

After the event, Warren responded to criticism that people might have about the doctors not being part of his church or not being Christian altogether. Hyman is Jewish and Oz is Muslim.

"My statement on that is: if I have a brain tumor, I find the best brain surgeon I can find. I'm not asking what his background is or what his belief is," he told online viewers. "If you are dying, you might even let an atheist save your life."

Participants of the Daniel Plan can follow a six-week small group curriculum at the church or online.

Every month, the website will feature new materials from the doctors including a live webcast. The next webcast will take place on Jan. 25.

On the Web: The Daniel Plan

Katherine T. Phan
Christian Post Reporter

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Focus on Family asks abortion-rights advocates to help make abortion less common

By Electa Draper
The Denver Post
The Denver Post

Focus on the Family president Jim Daly on Friday said he will bridge a great divide by asking abortion-rights advocates to work with his conservative Christian ministry to make abortion less common.

Reproductive-rights supporters say they want abortion to be legal, safe and rare, Daly said, and so his Colorado Springs-based media powerhouse will try to walk that common ground with them — lessening demand for abortion.

The "let's talk" offer to reproductive-rights groups signals a sea change in Focus' uncompromising approach to the abortion issue. It is bound to engender controversy about whether detente advances or hinders Daly's ultimate goal of making abortion illegal.

However, it is in keeping with his makeover of the house that James Dobson built. Daly has said he wants the ministry, which it says reaches 220 million listeners worldwide with its daily broadcasts, to have more conversations and fewer fights.

And Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains said it is willing to listen.

"As I think about this," Daly said during his Friday broadcast, "I think about the babies that we're losing right now because we cannot sit down and say, 'You want to make it rare — tell us how.' We won't agree that (abortion) is safe. We certainly will fight for the day that we can overturn Roe vs. Wade, because we want every life to be sacred."

In the meantime, Daly said, he wants to work with people who may disagree with Focus but with whom "we can eliminate 10,000, 20,000 or 30,000 of 1.2 million babies lost every year."

The 1.2 million figure, reported in 2008 by the Guttmacher Institute, originally a division of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, is widely accepted by both abortion-rights advocates and abortion foes.

Guttmacher also reports that 22 percent of all pregnancies, excluding miscarriages, end in abortion.

"Welcome any opportunity"

Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains spokeswoman Monica McCafferty said the organization has been working for more than 90 years to improve women's options.

"We certainly welcome any opportunity to work with anyone who wants to work on the root..."
causes of unintended pregnancies," she said. "Most of what we do is prevention."

Planned Parenthood, McCafferty said, takes a comprehensive approach to preventing unwanted pregnancies through education and improving access to affordable birth control. But abortion, she said, must remain legal.

"We certainly never want to see the day when women can't make this personal, private decision for themselves," she said.

Michael Cromartie, vice president of the conservative Ethics and Public Policy Center, said Daly's outreach is a bold move and likely to be misread by many conservatives.

"I suspect he will take a hit on this," Cromartie said. "People on the right will say he is giving up. But I think it could be effective."

Cromartie said Daly just might convince people there are too many abortions in the country.

"I think it's the kind of step the movement needs to make," he said.

Focus spokesman Gary Schneeberger said the ministry doesn't yet have the list of abortion-rights supporters it will contact, but Focus will reach out to that movement.

"It's something (Daly) is clearly very passionate about," Schneeberger said. "It's a 'Schindler's List' moment for us: How many lives can we save on the way to our goal of ending abortion? We don't know how it will be received."

Schneeberger said Focus accepts the opposition's word that it wants to reduce the numbers of abortions.

"I suspect things will happen very quickly. Within the next month, we certainly will have some conversations," he said. "This is a legitimate attempt to see if there isn't some overlapping goal."

Recent horror stories

Daly said his reaching out was partly a result of recent revelations in the media about human trafficking and the horror story of Pennsylvania abortionist Dr. Kermit Gosnell, recently charged with murder in grisly late-term abortions.

"And I think the Lord is saying here is a window of opportunity," Daly said. "This is about human beings and the death of human beings. And I think the entire nation should come together and say, 'Wait a minute. We're better than this.'

"We don't have to see this kind of tragedy, this kind of evil, show itself again."

Psychologist and author Juli Slattery, appearing on the program Friday with Daly, said some abortion opponents will question how Focus could work with people fighting to keep abortion legal.

"Some people are going to say that you are making a big compromise," Slattery said.

Daly said he and other abortion opponents weren't going to quickly reach their endgame: an abortion ban.
"I think that's obvious after 40 years," Daly said. "So what do we do right now to save the babies this year that will be lost if we don't sit down and decide how we're going to make it rare?"

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