

## CHAPTER 9

### NETWORKING WITH OTHER LEADERS

In February of 1970, a profound phenomenon occurred on the campus of Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky. A college chapel service went late... by approximately a week. During the nonstop chapel meeting, crowds ebbed and flowed from 75 students in early morning hours to more than 1,600. Participants included townspeople, students, faculty, visitors from the surrounding area and even travelers just passing through. Witnesses told of confessions, weeping, forgiveness, reconciliation and stirring testimonials.<sup>1</sup> Even after classes resumed from an unscheduled recess of 180 hours, testifying students ignited fires of spiritual enthusiasm, commitment and renewal in many localities. Three hundred of the college's 1,000 students answered requests to visit other campuses and churches and share their story. A special anointing appeared to accompany them as they traveled. Reports multiplied of similar phenomena occurring in many places where they testified. Asuza Pacific College, Ft. Wayne Bible College and Taylor University reported unscheduled spiritual awakenings among students and faculty on their campuses.<sup>2</sup>

Four months after the chapel service ended at Asbury, two female students from the college traveled to a United Methodist camp in the upper Midwest. They spent most of a week on the grounds informally sharing their experience and enjoying the friendships they had gained over the years from regular participation in the annual weeklong, intergenerational camp ministry. During the week an unorchestrated and profound outbreak of spiritual conviction and healing occurred among many of the 363 registrants. As senior boys sat in their dormitory porch for evening devotions and sang a chorus, the youth found themselves shaking and weeping. Two United Methodist pastors witnessed and experienced the unusual

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<sup>1</sup> Robert E. Coleman and David J. Gyertson, eds., *One Divine Moment: The Asbury Revival, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Ed.* (Wilmore: Asbury College, 1995), 13-21.

<sup>2</sup> Glen Gabel, *The Place of Prayer in Spiritual Renewal*, cites Harley R. Bierce of the *Indianapolis Star* for information on the spread of the Asbury Revival.

“visitation” that resulted in testimonies of conversions and spiritual empowerment. One of the observing pastors declared at the time, “I believe this is a very deep experience of the Holy Spirit that you will remember all your lives.” Years later, the other noted that it was a decisive experience for so many of those young men. Although teenage girls were in a different location, they experienced similar phenomena the same evening. One girl was startled to hear herself speak “in tongues.” She had never been exposed to that. Charismatic renewal was relatively new and controversial in that region of United Methodism at the time. It was amazing that the teenager happened to have a dorm chaperone who had experience with that phenomenon when the pool of sympathetic counselors in that subculture was so small. Adults also reported deep spiritual turning points during that week.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Asbury Revival was not unique, it accentuated something that has not been experienced in some of the recent spiritual renewals found in places like Modesto, California, Pensacola, Florida and Toronto. Those latter experiences remind one of two incidents with King Saul. When he was first anointed king by Samuel, he left for Gibeah. Saul met a procession of prophets and found himself prophesying (1 Sam. 10:10). Similarly, when Saul sought to kill David and found him with Samuel and the prophets in Naioth, he could not follow through. When Saul arrived, he was overcome by the Holy Spirit and prophesied (1 Sam. 19:18-24). Because the author of 1 Samuel notes each time that a famous phrase, “Is Saul also among the prophets?” arose from these incidents (1 Sam. 10:11-12, 19:24), one can imagine that Saul was not known for prophesying in other contexts. Most likely he only prophesied in these two localities. The anointing Saul experienced was tied to what God was doing in a particular locality. In similar fashion, these recent occurrences of renewal seem for the most part confined to their localities. They have not spread like the renewal at Asbury that seemed to hop and skip and settle wherever students traveled and spoke.

The Asbury Anointing mirrored more the biblical experience of Elijah and Elisha where a special power from God was passed from one person to another. Elisha’s relationship with Elijah resulted in spiritual empowerment (see 2 Kings 2:1-15). When the company of prophets from Jericho witnessed what God did through Elisha, they exclaimed, “The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha” (2 Kings 2:15). Consequently, Elijah’s ministry continued in the

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<sup>3</sup> This account is compiled from conversations with three United Methodist pastors, John Blackford, Elmer Huchel and Gordon Langmade, information from the 125 year history booklet of Red Rock Camp that was written by Blackford and Velma Anderson Wickstrom and printed in 1993, from personal observation and from conversations with other male and female youth participants in the experience.

person and personality of Elisha following his departure from earth. In a similar way, the phenomena that visited the Asbury College campus was more relational than local in its effect. The special work of God seemed to move translocally with the relationships that formed.

### **Recognizing Spiritual Empowerment**

In the gospel of John, Jesus spoke of the kind of spiritual empowerment that was exhibited by Asbury College students and Elijah. At the Feast of Tabernacles in the seventh chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus cried loudly:

“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. (John 7:37-39)

The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated the rains that provided life for the people of Israel. The nation was dependent upon annual rains for their food supply. Life was in the water that God gave His people. Similarly, Jesus identified Himself as the life-producing rain of God for any thirsty soul. He declared his believers to be bubbling streams and rivers that bring life wherever they flow. The gospel writer explains that Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit (John 7:39). In other words, Jesus was speaking of spiritual renewal and empowerment.

Spiritual empowerment frequently occurs in manners that foster close relationships within the body of Christ. For example, Philip's ministry resulted in the decisions of many Samaritans to believe in Christ and receive Christian baptism (Acts 8:5-13). However, the phenomena were missing that signaled that these believers were empowered by the Holy Spirit. After Peter and John arrived from Jerusalem and prayed for these converts, they were empowered as Peter and John's hands were laid on them (Acts 8:14-17). The stream that was in Philip, from which these Samaritans had drunk was now gushing in them. The experience was so dramatic that one Samaritan, noting how the power came through Peter and John, wanted to buy the secrets to this experience (Acts 8:18-19). In the end, this experience of spiritual empowerment emphasized the importance of networking. The Samaritans did not experience empowerment on their own. Their experience was delayed until Philip had the assistance of an apostolic team from Jerusalem. No doubt Philip's relationship with Peter and John was reinforced by his dependency upon their ministry. In similar manner, because the Samaritan church was empowered through the Jerusalem church, an important network of relationships was identified for them.

The Apostle Paul teaches empowerment through networking in several ways. Paul's relationship with Timothy was more than apprenticeship. Some form of spiritual empowerment occurred through his placing his hands on Timothy. Paul wrote, "I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (2 Tim. 1:6). This language does not suggest that Timothy acquired a skill through apprenticeship. Instead, it speaks of an empowering spiritual experience. Paul wrote Timothy in an earlier letter, "Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you" (1 Tim. 4:14). Regardless of whether these exhortations from Paul's letters speak of the same event or different experiences, they illustrate Timothy's empowerment through his participation in a spiritual network. He was blessed and empowered because of his submission to the ministry of Paul and a body of elders.

In Paul's letter to a divided church at Corinth, he speaks of the way God's Spirit reveals His presence. Paul uses the term *phanerosis*, which means "disclosure" or to make visible.<sup>4</sup> Paul tells the Corinthians that the Spirit makes His presence visible or accessible differently through individuals for the benefit of them all. Thus, one has a word of perspective that the others need to hear; another has gifts of healing that others need to experience (1 Cor. 12:7-13). The River of Life or Holy Spirit expresses His presence through various channels in different individuals. To drink fully, believers need to network with one another. Enlarging on this, Paul identifies people with distinctly different calls because of different workings of the Spirit. He asks: "All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they" (1 Cor. 12:29-30)<sup>5</sup> The language suggests that different people are accomplished in different aspects of the Holy Spirit's work and that networking with them is important. Moreover, individual believers are encouraged to passionately seek and develop the forms of spiritual empowerment that will most bless others as they are lovingly employed (1 Cor. 12:31 and 13:1-3).

Similarly, in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes:

It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach

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<sup>4</sup> Walter Bauer, "Phanerosis," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 861.

<sup>5</sup> New American Standard Bible – Updated Version.

unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:11-13)

Paul implies that a network of spiritual ministers has been given, and is necessary to adequately prepare believers for their role and calling in ministry. As believers drink from the multiple streams of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, they are prepared to act in such ways with one another that eventually every aspect of Christ's vision, character and ministry is expressed in their teamwork. Their dependency upon a ministry network fosters a vision that prizes relationships and encourages teamwork.

The critical nature of networking can be seen outside the scope of Christian ministry. Lyle Schaller cites a critique of public education. He writes:

One critic, Stanley Pogrow points out, "The equivalent of expecting teachers to develop the interventions they are going to apply (is) asking an actor to perform Shakespeare—but to write the play first." Pogrow goes on to point out that in the practice of medicine, physicians who invent their own medical procedures are vulnerable to charges of malpractice. In the parish ministry, however, we expect a minister to come in, invent the appropriate strategy for ministry for that particular congregation and also to implement that strategy. According to Pogrow, that makes as much sense as asking a physician to invent and apply the appropriate procedure for treating an illness... or for a group of vocalists to first compose and next sing an anthem without a director, music, or rehearsals.<sup>6</sup>

Appropriate networks empower skilled doctors to treat patients, talented actors and musicians to perform and spiritual elders to develop their congregations. Consequently, recognizing and partnering with people of various spiritual gifts and ministries are among the most decisive and critical actions any congregational leader can take. The development and effectiveness of every congregation rises and falls on these decisions.

It follows that the two most important skills in networking are recognizing spiritual empowerment and developing partnerships. This can be especially difficult in denominations because of three dynamics: denominational tradition, contemporary decline and sectarian defensiveness.

When church leaders allow tradition to define their identity, they generally do not see the charisma today because their eyes focus on what God did, not what God is doing. They even become suspicious and disparaging when the charisma comes in forms that do not match what they venerate in their denomination's history. Indeed, traditionalists tend to transfer

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<sup>6</sup> Schaller, *Tattered Trust*, 65.

their focus from the past charisma to the past forms through which the charisma was revealed. Conformity with past forms is identified with faithfulness and integrity. Examples of this include the recitation of ancient creeds and prayers in worship and the singing of century-old songs. In more evangelistic churches it includes commitment to old style camp meetings, midweek prayer meetings and Bible study classes (classroom-style discipleship training that does not allow for apprentice-experiences in servant and spiritual ministry).

Networking for spiritual empowerment in denominations is often difficult because of the ethos created by decline. When people are denominationally networked with leaders presiding over declining congregations, motivation to work together is lacking. Isolation is epidemic because fruit is a sign of empowerment and motivates people to form partnerships. Moreover, the ethos of decline breeds fear, suspicion and conformity rather than faith, trust and diversity through which charisma is unleashed.<sup>7</sup>

When denominational pastors associate with clergy that are sharply critical of the growing segments of Christianity, the ability to recognize and trust charisma at work in others is profoundly retarded. Since faithfulness is commended over fruitfulness and there are faults in leaders of growing movements, the charisma operating through those leaders is discounted. For example, Hadaway and Roozen report:

In mainstream denominations, growing churches and their leaders are often considered “suspect.” The pastor of a large, growing United Church of Christ congregation in Connecticut even suggested that other mainstream pastors think his church must have “sold out” in order to grow—resorting to questionable marketing techniques and other “gimmicks.”<sup>8</sup>

All of this makes it extremely difficult for many leaders to recognize charisma or spiritual empowerment today. There is a bias that must be overcome to recognize authentic spiritual power and ministry, and there is further discomfort in venturing outside one’s normal spiritual community to form meaningful partnerships. Unfortunately, ministerial associations, clergy study groups and pastor support groups, though ecumenical, rarely forge the spiritual kinships, traverse the ecclesiastical chasms or unveil the spiritual fruit that together put one in a

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<sup>7</sup> People are called to look back and recover the zeal and effectiveness in their tradition. Cries for unity arise as the movement flounders without a recognized charismatic leader. This internal focus detracts from any recognition of how their own mission is being accomplished currently by either maverick leaders within their denominational family or outside their family by other movements.

<sup>8</sup> Hadaway and Roozen, *Rerouting the Protestant Mainstream*, 61.

position to identify unique spiritual empowerment and create ministry partnerships. It is necessary then to go beyond these efforts at spiritual unity and effectiveness.

A more radical spiritual camaraderie with leaders of other congregations and traditions is necessary to unveil spiritual gifts and cultivate fruitful partnerships. This camaraderie can only be cultivated as clergy gather, support one another in prayer, and pursue a common vision. As an aura of trust arises from this interaction and friendships develop, clergy become aware of not only each other's pilgrimage and spiritual gifts but also what gifted individuals are blessing different ministries. Leaders are more likely to ask: "What's going on that is energizing and equipping my friend's congregation in effective ministry? Who are the significant players? In what ways is the charisma working through them? How can I partner with them and help my people drink from this stream of God's love and power?"

### **Growing from Friendships**

In studying the growth that is driving the expansion of Christianity worldwide as well as reforming Christianity in the west, C. Peter Wagner points to "apostolic networks."<sup>9</sup> He defines such a network as "a family of local churches."<sup>10</sup> The term "family" is important. It emphasizes not a label or an organization but the intimate relationships the leaders of those churches share.<sup>11</sup> Friendship is a vital quality and defining characteristic.

Brenda Brasher, analyzing one of these fast growing movements in the United States, notes how "friendship" is a striking feature characterizing the partnership of Calvary Chapel movement leaders with Chuck Smith, the movement's founder. These personal partnerships that are fueling tremendous expansion of the church are characterized by interactions described as "warm," "personal," and "affectionate." In fact, Brasher says that the accountability is "increasingly difficult to perceive."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, it may be more soul accountability than institutional accountability.

Ted Haggard speaks of a "divine flow" that welds people together in spiritual and ministerial partnership.<sup>13</sup> He believes the Holy Spirit not only creates providential meetings of

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<sup>9</sup> This is the thesis of and rationale for Wagner's book entitled *Churchquake*.

<sup>10</sup> Wagner, *Churchquake*, 147.

<sup>11</sup> "Family," in Wagner's definition of apostolic networks describes more than a sisterhood or brotherhood of clergy. There is a definite, charismatic leader, an apostle, who functions much like a parent. The relationships are as much personal as they are institutional.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>13</sup> Haggard, *The Life-giving Church*, 94.

people but also authors a flow between people that bonds them in genuine friendships if they respond positively to it. Biblical examples include David and Jonathon, Elijah and Elisha, Barnabas and Paul, Paul and Timothy. Haggard believes these attractions are divine and heeds them in partnering in ministry. He writes:

Life-giving ministry flows through godly relationships, not corporate structures. Corporate structures give us order and define our roles, but relationships empower us. It's the relationships with family members, elders, staff members, community leaders, the press and volunteers that are the core of life-giving ministries. When God creates supernatural relationships to make us more effective—if they are honorably maintained—they can empower and enable us to fulfill God's calling.<sup>14</sup>

Haggard asserts that every successful pastor knows and capitalizes on the truth that friendships within the congregation are what hold churches together and cause them to grow.<sup>15</sup> What is true in the local, congregational body is also critical for the development of leaders of those congregations. They need empowering friendships. In addition, the effective work of Christians in a denomination hinge on this principle of divine flow. Only genuine friendships can hold a denomination together and empower its leaders in ministry. Lyle Schaller notes that these empowering friendships and partnerships for congregational leaders are increasingly becoming interdenominational rather than denominational. He sees that as a key change in the last two decades.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, C. Peter Wagner writes of “Extradominational Networks” that are transforming the landscapes of cities.

Groupings of churches are forming on a territorial basis, particularly in cities. Some are identifying the “anchor churches” of a city and developing ways and means for the pastors of those churches to network together for the benefit of the whole city. In many cases the personal relationships, the mutual accountability and the camaraderie among pastors of a city across denominational lines far surpasses their sense of loyalty to fellow pastors of their own denominations who live in different locations.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>16</sup> Lyle Schaller, *21 Bridges to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Future of Pastoral Ministry* (Nashville, Abingdon: 1994), 137.

<sup>17</sup> Wagner, *Churchquake*, 31. These city networks described by Wagner may be more collegial than apostolic if they lack the parental development aspects with key, influential charismatic leaders. Wagner more recently has come to believe that purely collegial relationships will hinder a city's attempt to reach its populace. He now argues in *Apostles of the City: How to Mobilize Territorial Apostles for City Transformation* (Colorado Springs: Wagner Publications, 2000, 23-50) that cities need apostles and that transformation of a city relies upon the empowering dynamics of close friendships *and spiritual gifts recognized and exercised among the leaders.*

This divine flow in localities is critical for the unity of the church and its evangelization of any city. In emphasizing this point, Haggard frequently declares, “Any demon, no matter how weak, can penetrate a corporate structure. But no demon, no matter how strong, can penetrate a genuine friendship.”<sup>18</sup>

Accordingly, the advance of the Christian movement rests in large part on the cultivation of genuine, truly spiritual and enduring friendships. Similarly, the future of components within the movement, congregations, city churches and denominations, hinge on the same dynamic. Unfortunately, certain denominational decisions have hindered this development. Lyle Schaller notes that in 1906 the six fast-growing predecessor denominations of The United Methodist Church recorded 5.2 million members divided among 282 annual conferences. The average conference served 18,440 members. In the ninety years since, membership climbed above and then declined back to 8.2 million members, while the number of Annual Conferences were reduced to 67. Consequently, by 1996 the average annual conference served 128,358 church members. What once was “relatively small, intimate and clergy owned-and-operated religious gatherings” of 60 to 75 pastors have evolved into “a large, tightly scheduled, and anonymous business meeting” with around a thousand clergy and lay delegates.<sup>19</sup> Within these gatherings the development of empowering friendships have been replaced by the maneuvering of issue-oriented factions.

Clergy, working in these settings, must become intentional in establishing, cultivating and maintaining life-giving friendships. Undeterred when charged with forming cliques and undaunted by geographical moves, they can relentlessly, in this age of communication, pursue and maintain lifelong, empowering friendships both within and without their denominational families.

It is important, however, to not mistake genuine friendships for polite acquaintances or mentorship through books, videotapes and other resources. The latter are helpful but not substitutes for empowering friendships. Not everyone can form an empowering partnership with Bill Hybels, Billy Graham or highly visible leaders. Many leaders can glean helpful principles from them and enjoy the benefits of some of their spiritual gifts, but relatively few can enjoy the power of genuine friendship because of the level of investment such a relationship requires. C. Peter Wagner notes that “apostolic” networks stand or fall on

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<sup>18</sup> Wagner, *Churchquake*, 103.

<sup>19</sup> Schaller, *Tattered Trust*, 43.

personal relationships and that the most crucial relationship is the friendship of individual pastors with a charismatic leader who is investing in them.<sup>20</sup>

In that vein, Brenda Brasher notes that the phenomenal growth of the Calvary Chapel movement is because Chuck Smith relies on friendships rather than institutional control to advance the gospel. Smith's friendships have resulted in another generation of charismatic leaders or apostles who are investing in and developing other leaders through vital friendships. "Calvary supports not a single source of charismatic authority, but multiple ones," declares Brasher.<sup>21</sup> This happens because Smith's influence is primarily relational not institutional. He publicly affirms the fruitfulness and authority of the megachurch leaders he has mentored. Moreover, he allows them great autonomy in defining their identity (such as church name), programs, ministry styles and in developing their own particular ministry schools. Smith exercises an appallingly slim amount of institutional control. In some cases, the connection of these church ministries with Calvary Chapel is so fuzzy that his personal friendship with these megachurch leaders is the only thing visible.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast, The United Methodist Church and other denominations often give high visibility and rigid structure to their relationships with leaders. Unfortunately, denominations normally impose leadership rather than recognize it. The denominational supervisor has influence because of geography and rules rather than friendship and vision. District supervisors are crippled by such an approach to leadership. They lack the influence of deep personal friendships necessary to effectively promote growth in congregational leaders. The number of pastors and leaders they oversee further hinders them. When a United Methodist District Superintendent supervises 70 churches, how many pastors can be his or her personal friend? In many denominations the supervisor is most accurately described as a colleague, acquaintance and supervisor. The relationship is vocational. Yet denominational districts would have tremendous potential if they were smaller and relational rather than geographical. United Methodism is blessed with the wineskin of missionary conferences that are primarily relational rather than geographical. That concept is a gift that, at minimum, can informally be employed by local church leaders.

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<sup>20</sup> Wagner, *Churchquake*, 128.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

Decisive spiritual and personal development requires the encouragement and accountability that exist with more intimate contact. Networks of personal friendships are smaller and somewhat limited because of the investment they demand from their participants. It is exactly because of this, that Wagner warns leaders in the apostolic networks to (1) limit the number of individuals and churches they supervise and (2) encourage the multiplication of similar friendships and networks through their apprentice-friends.<sup>23</sup>

### **Utilizing Teaching Churches**

Even as we are designed to grow in relational networks where we experience the benefit of spiritual gifts (charisma) and genuine friendships, our exposure to healthy congregations can both energize and equip us to lead local churches. Healthy congregations serve well as teaching churches. Indeed, there is a parallel in the medical profession. Teaching hospitals provide effective care for patients and are breeding grounds for physicians of exceptional skill. In these communities, physicians learn both through classroom instruction, discussion, observation and mentorship. Similarly, in the Christian world, there are over 300 self-identified teaching churches in the USA that have earned a high level of credibility by their performance in several areas of ministry.<sup>24</sup> They often host two-to-five day conferences where teams from other local churches are invited to come, to hear about and to observe their effective ministries. These conferences typically offer participants new ideas, time for questions, exposure to ministry plans and education on the importance of a local church's philosophy of ministry.<sup>25</sup>

The power of this approach can be seen in Frazier Memorial United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. Led by John Ed Mathison, it has hosted conferences for local church teams for more than a decade. In a 1988 conference participants observed a state of the art nursery and an aggressive children's worship ministry among many other lay ministries. A question period revealed that the church had sent a team of its own staff and volunteers to Chicago to learn from a church there that had developed a reputation for its

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<sup>23</sup> Wagner, *Churchquake*, 140.

<sup>24</sup> Schaller, *Discontinuity and Hope*, 65.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

nursery. Thus a teaching church had learned and grown from a teaching church, and then simply modeled what it learned.<sup>26</sup>

Lyle Schaller believes this type of partnership will replace the programmatic functions of denominational agencies. He writes:

We must replace that model with a highly skilled (denominational) staff who will be in partnership with a network of teaching churches. One part of the process requires the staff to work with congregational leaders in designing a custom-made strategy to fit that particular (local) church's resources and environment. Next, we must take the leadership from that congregation to a teaching church that has been implementing a similar strategy. This will enable them to learn from practitioners how to implement their strategy.<sup>27</sup>

A leadership team that is immersed for a period in a healthy congregation, which is successfully meeting similar challenges, receives vision, motivation, skills and supportive relationships that more fully prepares them to create positive change in their own congregation. In other words, if clergy find themselves leading declining congregations in transitional neighborhoods, they are better off partnering with inner city congregations that expand as they innovatively reach multiracial constituencies. If they lead rural parishes in decaying farming regions, they will benefit more from time in a growing and innovative rural congregation than denominational workshops and seminars that outline "tried and true" strategies. Schaller believes this is a critical method for denominational leaders to embrace and promote.

However, parish leaders need not wait for this kind of encouragement from their denominational leaders. Wherever churches are experiencing growth and blessing in youth work, outreach, prayer ministries, children's programs, small groups, and so on, both clergy and lay partnerships can be developed that will bear fruit. Schaller further notes:

In the ideal world the pastor who is serving a congregation that needs to define a new role for a new day will have spent a year or two, or at least a month or two, on the staff of a teaching church that resembled that one five years ago and now has moved into a new era in its history. To accomplish this, we need to make this model the top priority in the denominational strategy.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Noted from participation in the 1988 ministry conference at Frazier Memorial United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.

<sup>27</sup> Schaller, *Tattered Trust*, 67-68.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

What Schaller envisions is an apprenticeship for pastors. Teaching churches provide a natural setting for development of pastors. This is an appropriate extension of networking with teaching churches and will be the focus of the next chapter. However, a second principle naturally flows from Schaller's prescription.

An outgrowth of partnership with healthy, creative churches is a set of relationships that spur innovation. These relationships might rightly be called *entrepreneurial zones*.

### **Creating Entrepreneur Zones**

The famed Mayo Clinic is located in the middle of a farming region on the northern plains of the USA. The medical center sports the largest hospital in the world under one roof, an additional hospital, a medical school and myriad research facilities that together employ over 23,000 people. This vast sprawl of buildings, its reputed excellence and international draw are tributes to networking and entrepreneurship. In two words, the Mayo Clinic is about teamwork and innovation. Because the human body is composed of multiple and interactive systems, each clinic patient is seen and treated by a network or team of specialists in those systems and also residents who are developing highly specialized skills. Moreover, the creative interaction of these teams and specialists have spurred many firsts that have advanced medicine and the delivery of medical care. In short, the Mayo Clinic is an entrepreneurial zone.

Most often entrepreneurial zones are not confined to an institution. They spill over into multiple institutions and spin-off companies. Silicon Valley, the long heralded center for creativity in computer technology, is people feeding off people's knowledge and expertise, its people energized with ideas by other people's ideas; its people are challenged by other people to create in an atmosphere that evokes vision and is friendly to risk.

Cultivating such relationships and atmosphere as church leaders is crucial. Ted Haggard writes of the counterproductive treatment given to the church's young, innovative leaders. He notes that a plethora of Christian innovators leave parish ministry for alternative forms of service.<sup>29</sup>

One innovator who left denominational leadership is Loren Cunningham. Formerly an Assemblies of God minister, his specific vision to mobilize youth and their enthusiasm in worldwide evangelism did not fit with the Assemblies leadership culture and structure. Forced

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<sup>29</sup> Haggard, *The Life-Giving Church*, 43-45.

to choose his denomination or his vision, he withdrew and established Youth With a Mission (YWAM). By 1985, his organization had in place 20,000 volunteers in 190 locations within 100 countries, and around 5,000 were full-time, long-term missionaries.<sup>30</sup> In contrast to Cunningham's denominational experience, spiritual or ecclesiastical entrepreneurial zones welcome the visionary and encourage innovation. They are tolerant of risk and failure believing that God is in the vision and the battle for redemption. Christian leaders feed off one another as they share their successes, failures and challenges in pursuing common visions.

To some degree this depicts the internal environment of the fast-growing mega-congregations. They have a well-defined vision and an entrepreneurial spirit in pursuing it. For example, there was never a doubt about Willow Creek's mission: to turn irreligious people, turned off by their experience of the American church, into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. That single focus and the innovative environment attracted, even when there was no money to pay them, leaders in drama, music, and technology to partner and create innovations that redefine the local church. Lynne and Bill Hybels write:

People have often asked how we managed to get Willow Creek off the ground with no paid staff. What they don't realize is that we had a huge unpaid staff. Bill was the point leader and communicator. Dave Holmobo was the programming coordinator and music director. Randy BeMent was our administrator. Dave Swetman and later Don Cousins led Son City. Rory Noland directed Son City music. Joel Jager handled production. Rick Wold directed drama... We probably had an unpaid staff of fifteen to twenty people. Many of them worked forty or fifty hours a week for the church. To make ends meet, they worked part-time jobs or night shifts, or even enlisted friends to help support them. ...we knew our cause. Our goal, to which every member of our core was sold.<sup>31</sup>

Churches that make a difference are zones where the entrepreneurial work of the Spirit flourishes. When innovative leaders of separate congregations cluster together because of common vision and a desire to learn and grow from each other, they function as an entrepreneurial community and build growing movements.

It is important to understand that entrepreneurial zones exhibit clustering that is voluntary, vision-driven, and innovative. Such a zone is voluntary and populated by people of kindred spirit. It is friendship-oriented. Denominational leaders can encourage and affirm the presence of such communities; however, they cannot mandate them. These communities are

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<sup>30</sup> Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, 130-131.

<sup>31</sup> Hybels and Hybels, *Rediscovering Church*, 60-61.

birthed in friendship, in vision and in heart. They are not the function of geography, demography or denominational membership. Secondly, such communities share a common picture of what they are working for. Frequently, there may be a dominant leader whose work greatly embodies what is envisioned or desired, but not always. Whatever the case, there is a singleness of purpose and hope that motivates the association of these creative and often independent-minded leaders. Finally, these communities experiment and evaluate with a vengeance. They are intensely pragmatic and results-oriented. They see the value of faithfulness, but they believe in fruitfulness. They believe they are suppose to produce fruit.

Occasionally, an entrepreneurial zone may exist entirely within an institution or organization, but more often it spills over into cause-driven associations and other kinds of networking. One is in an entrepreneurial zone when he or she forms partnerships with people who are vision-driven, when creative people are attracted to that partnership and when innovation multiplies through that partnership.

One exciting development is an entrepreneurial zone that formed among a number of Baptist Church leaders in Texas. They are leaving the conventional image of a local church behind as they multiply both campuses and congregational units. The average attendance among these churches has doubled within the last two years despite the fact that majority of them have not pursued this concept longer than three years. We will examine this phenomenon more closely in chapter twelve.

God's creativity is unleashed in leaders when they recognize and avail themselves of the gifts God is offering them in the body of Christ. God distributes His gifts that we might be woven together in fellowship, friendship and ministry. Our networking with others can bring spiritual empowerment, strength from intimate friendships, skills from partnering churches and tremendous advances through creative partnerships. We leaders need not walk alone and must not walk alone.