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Director of Healthy Church Ministries

# Healthy Church MINISTRIES

2005 – 2007 REPORT TO THE U.S. NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The following comprehensive report is submitted to Bishop Ron Ramsey and the National Conference as a summary of the work of the Director of Healthy Church Ministries for the period of August 2005 to June 2007. Rather than a purely statistical report, it is presented in narrative form in order to show the steps taken to implement the strategic plan.

## August 2005

The position of Director of Healthy Church Ministries is established. The two main responsibilities will be to establish and give oversight to the cluster system as set forth in the *Discipline*, and to work with churches in doing assessment of their ministries. During the first months (through December 2005), we worked at helping churches form into cluster groups and worked with the Bishop in appointing leaders for each of the clusters.

## January 2006

We did our first training of cluster leaders. We shared a vision of five strategic initiatives that were put forth by the Bishop and confirmed by the Executive Leadership Team at their October 2005 meeting:

1. Implement and encourage an atmosphere where multiplication of leaders and churches will be considered as normal.
2. Encourage spiritual formation and renewal within the churches of the United Brethren in Christ.
3. Actively equip churches and pastors for effective ministries.
4. Develop a plan to identify and retain those who are being called into fulltime Christian service.
5. Discover, evaluate, and articulate the perceived brand image of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ.

In addition, we gave some direction and support to the cluster leaders as they began their

work. I cannot stress enough my respect and appreciation for these leaders. Without pay, they have faithfully led their clusters toward achieving the desired outcomes. I applaud them and cherish their partnership.

During the first part of the year, I spent time meeting with some of the clusters, conducted Natural Church Development training and assessment in 15 of our churches, and met with the cluster leaders in regional meetings. The Bishop and I, together with the other directors (Gary Dilley, Tom Blaylock, and Steve Dennie), evaluated our current status and needs. We also affirmed an Acts 1:8 view of ministry: Jerusalem (Healthy Church), Judea/Samaria (Church Multiplication), and world (Global Ministries).

## June 2006

The Bishop and I attended a conference in California entitled “Hit the Bullseye.” Through panel discussions led by pastors and some lectures/seminars, this conference presented the story of the transformation of an American Baptist district in California and Nevada led by Dr. Paul Borden. Their leadership philosophy and church assessment approach, as well as their biblical convictions, clearly reflected the approach we felt we needed to take. The key elements include:

1. Training/mentoring of pastors about leadership in clusters
2. Consultation with churches about being outward-focused, setting up a structure that supports the mission, doing lay training events that teach the same principles that the pastor is learning, and resourcing the church by networking and supplying whatever we can to help them meet their goals.
3. Networking with other groups who share our convictions.

We both participated in one of the church consultation weekends led by Paul Borden—Bishop Ramsey at a church in Colorado, and

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me at a church in Texas.

## **Fall 2006**

By late summer, we prepared a Strategic Long Range Plan that incorporated all the initiatives presented earlier along with the biblical and philosophical principles we were adapting from what we learned. That strategic plan was refined and presented to the Executive Leadership Team. They affirmed the plan, and I spent the rest of the fall sharing it with regional gatherings of clusters, as well as spending time with pastors by providing a meal for them all. The final gathering happened in February, except for Kansas and the Northwest. I will have the opportunity to meet with them yet this year.

During these gatherings, we also began to establish a list of churches and pastors who desired to have a consultation done at their church.

## **December 2006**

The first consultation was held at Banner Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. In January 2007, the second consultation was held at Gaines Church, Caledonia, Mich. I have been coaching these two churches as well as setting the stage with several other churches to do more consultations during 2007.

In addition, I asked Dennis Miller to start a model cluster that includes three pastors and churches in the Columbus, Ohio, area as well as two others. The intent is for this cluster to model the direction we want to take in having pastors of growing churches serving as mentors in our cluster groups.

## **The Stages of Progression**

The steps we have taken over the past 18-24 months have been intentional and incremental. The immediate step was the establishment of the cluster groups. This has been fairly successful. There have continued to be challenges regarding the involvement of retired and/or unassigned ministers in a cluster group. There have also been a couple clusters that have not functioned properly. But overall, participation has been fairly high and the groups are accomplishing their primary intents.

The second step was to have some regional meetings with groups of clusters in a given area in order to share the Strategic Plan and field questions. That was accomplished except for Kansas and the Northwest as mentioned earlier. We intend to have such a gathering once per

year. The next step that will take place in 2007 is to hold a regional lay training event. This will serve almost like a former annual conference meeting and renew the relational component that some have expressed might be missing since the disbanding of the annual conferences.

## **Things You Should Know**

The conviction that the Bishop and I share is that the only purpose for the existence of our positions is the support for the mission of the local church. Therefore, we are in the process of transitioning the public branding of the office from that of a hierarchical denominational headquarters to that of a resource center. The purpose of that center is to help local churches build healthy ministries and fulfill the Great Commission.

The primary way we can prove our intent is presence. The Bishop and I have been present in over a third of our churches so far for worship, meetings, or visits. Now that we have the process in motion, a majority of my time is spent on the road with pastors and churches.

We have established a direction and are re-organizing around that purpose. An example is the discontinuing of the Healthy Church Leadership Team. There is no longer a strategic purpose for that team, so we disbanded it and are using the money budgeted for team meetings to give resources to pastors and churches.

We have and are in the process of establishing cooperative relationships with other groups who share our vision and purpose. We have done a cooperative church plant with the Wesleyan Church in Michigan and we are working at connecting our Florida churches with a Church of God cluster in the Orlando area.

There has been a great response to the direction we are headed. There is a loud cry for us to raise the bar and hold it high with accountability. The desire is to get every church to fulfill its God-given potential in its location.

It is a privilege to serve as a team with Bishop Ramsey and the other directors. I remind us that to make such an historic transition as a group will take five to seven years. But I believe we are on the right track and are committed to the process. I believe our best days are still ahead of us.

Respectfully submitted,

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