

*pose and organizational cooperation are evident?*

To probe these questions openly and honestly early in the process will bring clarity of vision or reveal incompatibilities. There is no failure, if two groups part ways peaceably, after examining all of these issues and finding that their differing expectations don't correspond. On the other hand, to fail to ask these questions may

itself be the biggest failure. Admittedly, some of the answers will change over time, and others may not need immediate definition. A diagnosis is not the disease; it merely reveals whether or not the patient is healthy. If healthy, then vitamins, exercise and appropriate diet are ordered. If not, medical care can cure the patient. So it is, in examining this dual manifestation of the Body of Christ.



**Chapter Eleven:**

**Tell Me the New, New Story**



“Grace Point Church of the Nazarene graciously opened its doors to us so that we could hold services in their facility. We began with services on Sunday afternoons, because all classrooms were being used during the morning hours, and there was no space for the Spanish-language group to meet. Our services began at two in the afternoon. I would play the guitar, my wife would lead worship, my father-in-law, and another retired missionary from Colombia would play hymns on the piano.”



# Tell Me the New, New Story

We are hesitant to provide church models, as each context, history, people group, and organization is unique. However, among the thousand ethnic churches currently in the North American Church of the Nazarene, certain church arrangements have taken root with some success. Briefly, they are:

### **1. The “Adoption” Arrangement**

In the “adoption” example, the sponsoring church adopts an ethnic congregation within its own facility that has come intact from another location. This sponsoring church makes space available and pays most, if not all of the increased financial load of facility use, including subsidizing the financial support of the ethnic congregation’s pastoral expense. The financial obligations are gradually shifted over to the ethnic congregation, as it is able to assume it. The arrangement is seen as a short-term relationship, with the expectation that as the ethnic congregation matures, it will increasingly earn its own independence.

### **2. The “Initiator” Arrangement**

Here, a congregation initiates an ethnic congregation within its facility. It does so by starting from scratch, with a Bible study, then a Sunday School department, then a full-fledged congregation. The sponsoring church feels a great

“buy-in,” as it has set the terms, provided the resources, and chosen the leadership. As the ethnic congregation grows, it may choose to remain permanently under the umbrella of the sponsoring church, or it may grow until it needs a new facility, at which point it will have to determine if it remains under the legal umbrella of the sponsoring church or seeks its own independence.

### **3. The Joint Ownership Arrangement**

A joint ownership example consists of two or more congregations sharing the governance and management of a single umbrella church. Each organized congregation shares representation on a “superboard” on the basis of an agreed formula, pro-rated by congregational membership and financial income. This board makes joint decisions concerning facility usage, shared programs, and financial allotments. The individual congregations maintain their own boards, financial records, pastoral selections, and congregational duties.

### **4. The District Plant Arrangement**

In this example, a district sponsors a cross-cultural church plant in the facility of an existing church. The district assumes the financial and supervisory responsibilities for the newly developing congregation.

This example may be maintained, even after the new congregation matures and assumes its own financial and administrative responsibilities. It is possible that two or more congregations continue to worship at the facility owned by the founding group, each separately as fully organized churches.

Open lines of communication must be maintained for purposes of scheduling, facility care and operations, financial accountability and fraternity in order to avoid an “us” and “them” mentality.

### **5. The Transitional Arrangement**

In the transitional church, the existing congregation finds itself in decline due to changing demographics. The ethnic church initiates a new work with the intention of supplanting the existing congregation. The transition can be made difficult by the reluctance of the older congregation to relinquish control of the facility to the newer group. Often, there is great financial stress on both congregations during the transition. This is where a sponsoring church can mediate or partner with both congregations to provide a healthy transition.

### **6. The Bilingual Pastor Arrangement**

Congregations in transition may want to hire a pastor who is truly bilingual and is willing to pastor two different congregations. The advantage here is that the second generation ethnic young people have a place to land, probably in the English-speaking option.

However, the effort required on the part of the leadership is great, and such leaders are rare. The strength of the model lies in the unique character of the bilingual leadership. “Two for the price of one” also helps in the financial arrangements of the church.

Other arrangements exist often with compo-

nents of these, with examples of failure, and success within each of them. However, here are two case studies that seem to exhibit harmonious notes of multi-congregational arrangements shared on both sides.

#### **I.1 Fort Wayne Grace Point South Church of the Nazarene (*Transcript of Interview with Senior Pastor Chuck Sunberg, Conducted March, 2010*)**

“We were formerly Lake Avenue Church of the Nazarene. I came as senior pastor in 2005 and shortly afterwards met with the District Superintendent, Dr. David Roland, who recommended to me the son-in-law, Javier Mondragon, of his Spanish-language district Coordinator, Carlos Sol to help begin a Spanish-language ministry. We started on Sunday afternoons, and then moved to Saturday nights, attracting a group of about 30. I discovered Javier to be an extremely strong and competent leader, gifted in both English and Spanish.

After a period of time, we moved the service to Sunday afternoon because all Sunday School rooms were occupied in the morning. However, very soon we became aware that a church called New Vision Church of the Nazarene, located about ten miles from our campus on the south side was vacant. With the assistance of the district superintendent we worked out arrangements for the congregation to move there. From that point we were called Grace Point North, and they, Grace Point South.

We encouraged a group of our members to transfer at least temporarily with them, and about 40-50 did. Eventually, about 30 continue to this day in that congregation.

Though the ministry started as a Spanish-speaking ministry, the demographics in the south resulted in the need to make this a “multicultural” congregation as about one-third who attend

are Black, one-third white and one-third Hispanic. Pastor Javier preaches now, alternating with his wife, Annette Mondragon, in Spanish and English. Obviously, some people feel some discomfort with the arrangement and have left. However, attendances in general have grown to about 100.

Pastor Javier and the congregation are fully financed by the Grace Point Church, which includes both congregations. South raises about \$40,000 a year, while the expenses run about \$90-100,000. Though there have been some nay-sayers in the North congregation, the board is fully behind the arrangement. We see it as an organic relationship less dependent on contractual agreement but very much on personal relationships. I meet with Javier weekly. We coordinate sermon series, using the same Scriptures, but cooperate on Faith Promise and Revival services, and have pulpit exchanges. On Labor Day, we celebrate a joint picnic, and twice a year on Sunday nights, we have a joint service. However, his congregation sees him as pastor. Initially we had planned to have my sermons videocast in his congregations, but Javier is such a great preacher that there was no need for that. At this point, there is some representation from their congregation in the Finance committee, and we are seeking to integrate members of his congregation eventually more fully into our board and committees. Javier is fully a member of our staff. However, we serve more in an advisory capacity, rather than dictate his ministry.

For us, it has been a wonderful arrangement. Neither congregation seems to be interested in changing the terms, nor is there any financial pressure or time frame that would push us to seek changes.

We are delighted with the arrangement and believe that our model of one church and two congregations is a blessing for all concerned.”

## **I.2 Fort Wayne Grace Point South Church of the Nazarene (Narrative Story of Pastor Javier Mondragon)**

“When my wife and I arrived in Fort Wayne, Indiana in 2007, we never could have imagined that our ministry would look the way it does today. It was our goal in coming to Fort Wayne to begin a church for the Spanish speaking people in the city.

Grace Point Church of the Nazarene graciously opened its doors to us so that we could hold services in their facility. We began with services on Sunday afternoons, because all classrooms were being used during the morning hours, and there was no space for the Spanish-language group to meet. Our services began at two in the afternoon. I would play the guitar, my wife would lead worship, my father-in-law and another retired missionary from Colombia would play hymns on the piano.

Our start was in February 2007 and five months later we had a group of 25 to 30 regular attendees. Meanwhile, Grace Point was going through a time of transition as they wanted to expand because the church was growing. In July, I was approached by Senior Pastor Chuck Sunberg who asked me about becoming a part of the team at Grace Point instead of being a separate entity from the church. I happily told him that I would like that. When my wife and I had arrived in Fort Wayne, we didn't have a salary and the offerings we would collect in our small congregation were sent weekly to the district office, which would then in turn send us a monthly love offering to help us financially.

In July, the church board at Grace Point met and voted to hire me as a part of the staff. By August, I was officially on the staff of Grace Point as the Hispanic Ministry pastor.

From the time we began services in Spanish, we started meeting families whose parents were im-

migrants. However, their children are first generation born or raised in the US. While the parents prefer to speak, sing, and listen in Spanish, the children chose to communicate in English.

In order to reach both generations and keep families intact, we came up with the idea to hold services in both languages, English and Spanish simultaneously. This would be totally out of the ordinary and unique. The truth is, we didn't know if it would work but we wanted to try. We switched our service from Sunday to Saturday night.

The songs were projected on screen in both English and Spanish side by side, I preached in Spanish, and my wife interpreted phrase by phrase. When she preached in English, I interpreted into Spanish. Our announcements then and now were given in both languages, and the bulletin and all church publications are in both languages.

Our services on Saturday nights began very well, and we maintained our attendance. But God already had other plans in mind for us.

In the summer of 2007, a Nazarene church in the south part of the city became vacant. The pastor had resigned, and the church had closed. The building sat empty for a few months, and the district superintendent, concerned about the maintenance of the building, wanted to start something there. Grace Point Church wanted to expand its facilities and so, when Pastor Sunberg and staff became aware of the available building, we began to talk about making it a branch of Grace Point. This new church was located in the south part of the city, closer to the Hispanic community. The idea of starting the Hispanic church caught fire. Pastors Chuck and Carla Sunberg and I met with the district superintendent to talk about the empty building and the possibilities of a new Grace Point campus. The superintendent allowed Grace Point to initiate

the new arrangement. Work was then invested in what would become Grace Point South Campus. Up to this moment, no one knew exactly what this new church campus would look like, but we knew that it was a great opportunity and that the hand of God was in it. Before opening the new South Campus, we studied the community around the building and learned that it was multicultural with whites, Hispanics, and African-Americans living in the area. We concluded that instead of initiating a Spanish congregation, we should start a bilingual multicultural church that reflects the community in which the church is located, to reach a multicultural community.

We again changed the time of our services, from Saturday nights to Sunday mornings but now in a new location under the name of Grace Point South. Thirty people from the north campus came with us to begin the new campus to begin identifying with us. Our first service was held on November 11th, 2007 with 40 people in attendance.

At this point, we had not formally announced to the community that we had begun the church. Our goal was to launch our new campus on March 23, 2008, so that we could use the time leading up to that date as "practice" or a "dry run," getting ready and filling all necessary positions within the church with our north campus volunteers. On our launch date, we placed an article in the local newspaper and got a clip on the local television news. We also put up signs on our property announcing the services. On Easter Sunday, we had 135 people attend service and twelve people gave their lives to Christ.

Grace Point South Campus officially opened its doors as a different kind of church, a multicultural church for a multicultural community. Today after two years, we are moving forward with the ministry. Everything is done in the flow of two languages. People from ten different coun-

tries attend, representing Argentina, Dominican Republic, Peru, Paraguay, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, México, and the United States. One look at our congregation gives you a glimpse of a wonderfully woven tapestry of diversity: white, African American, and Hispanics, beautiful hues of color united in Christ's love. We celebrate our diversity, as each year we hold a special International dinner the Sunday before Thanksgiving where people bring dishes of food that represent their country of origin, and we all fellowship together.

We consider ourselves one church in two locations: Grace Point North and Grace Point South. We do not have a separate church board at Grace Point South. Although we do have a representative council in our congregation, we are still very connected to the North Campus. We share the same vision and the same values, although we adjust them according to the needs of our congregation and community.

We have many benefits in being connected to Grace Point North campus; we have resources available for each department, not necessarily financially but in moral support. We are fortunate to have resources for Bible studies, regulations, methods and organization. If any one of the department leaders has a question, we can always go to our children's or youth pastor at the North campus. On Sunday mornings, we use the church buses to transport people to and from our services. On occasion, we have people from the North campus come to bring special music or to help out in some other way.

A few months ago, I had lunch at the mall food court. I was deeply impacted when I realized all of the options and diversity that one can find there: Chinese, Japanese, Italian, and Mexican fare. As I ate my plate of Chinese food, I looked around. There were people of all colors, ethnicities, languages, all eating in the same place un-

der the same roof. I thought, "If this can happen in the world, why can't it happen in the church." That is what we want to be: Grace Point South Campus, a church that welcomes everyone.

**Glories:** The biggest satisfaction is to see people find the Lord and start a new life in Christ, to see people interact with each other even if they don't speak the same language. They love each other, and in our prayer meetings, everyone prays in the language in which they feel most comfortable. We have a saying at Grace Point South, "God does not need a translator." The majority of people coming from the North Campus as volunteers have grown so much as leaders. They are very passionate about their ministry at the South campus. They see themselves as missionaries in their own city. Our focus is to see people from different ethnicities, colors, and nations come together in worship as in Revelation 7:9. Grace Point South is just a little taste of heaven in Fort Wayne.

**Trials:** Our Church is definitely not for everyone. Although we welcome everyone, the bilingual way we do church has been hard as people come and go, or serve for a period of time and leave. Reaching out to the community has been difficult, because people move away, given the economic recession, which has hurt people and left many houses in our neighborhood empty.

We still have not reached our goals at Grace Point South the way we would like to. One of our dreams is that everything we do will reflect our diverse congregation. Our music ministry has been the biggest challenge. We need a good worship leader that can lead, both willing and talented, to play different styles of music that reflect our many preferences such as Gospel, Latino rhythms, etc.

At the moment, our plans are to stay connected to the North campus and continue as one church in two locations. Our advantage is that we have

a senior pastor who understands, is passionate about missions, loves people and is a great leader. We've talked about starting new campuses in the future. One of our biggest dreams as leaders is to have a strong church, where all departments and ministries have strong leadership and function efficiently, so that some day we can send a group of leaders from Grace Point South to start a new campus in the city. Maybe it will be called Grace Point East or West. Who knows?

### **II.1 Nashville First Church of the Nazarene (*Transcript of Interview with Rev Dale Benson, Senior Associate Pastor*)**

"We were approached at Easter in 2007 by Haitian Evangelist Thervy Damassi, about the possibility of housing a Haitian congregation that he led called Iglesia de Dieu, under a rental arrangement. I was assigned by our senior pastor Gary Henecke, because of my prior work with Haitians in South Florida, to negotiate the arrangement.

We determined some necessary prior conditions. We offered Rev. Damassi the Nazarene Manual in French and asked him to read it to determine if there was some theological compatibility between his church and ours. He did and agreed that he and his congregation would feel harmony with that doctrine.

The Haitian coordinator, Pascal Permis, came up from Florida to meet with the congregation and stayed over several days. Indeed, he held revival services for the Haitians.

They were in something of a desperate condition, having rented another church which had been sold. At that time, their congregation had an attendance of 70. When the approval and the comfort level were achieved for a move, 38 of the members actually transferred over. Though their doctrinal policies seemed to dovetail with the Nazarene theology, the struggle took place

in the area of matching "polities." It was agreed that their congregation and Sunday School would flip-flop with the program of Sunday mornings of the English-speaking service, to make space available. A small chapel became theirs at this time.

Evangelist Damassi did not feel like he could fully function as a pastor. Meanwhile, Dr Maromy Samuel, a medical doctor, had transferred to Trevecca Nazarene University to acquire his theological training. His wife was the daughter of a major Nazarene pastor in Haiti, and so he was soon appointed as Damassi's assistant pastor. Despite his title, he continues to have a major role in the church and is the person who attends weekly meetings with the First Nashville Church of the Nazarene staff.

Initially, the rental arrangement was \$300 a month. However, the nature of the relationship has so tightened that there is no longer a rental fee. Indeed, the funds that had been collected were put into an account that, when the church formally consented to be a fully integrated part of First Church, were put into a reserve account in their name. The congregation now raises about \$15-20,000 a year, and has been able to purchase its own van. However, because the legal arrangements are with First Church, their board has to give the approvals, and holds the title and insurance. In the course of those discussions, it became apparent that the relationship had become so intimate that, given the opportunity to become an independent "new start" congregation, neither side desired this. Indeed, as one sponsoring board member said, "They are a part of us." Currently, the attendance runs about 60, a drop in the bucket compared to the 1200 attendees, and \$2.4 million budget in the English-speaking congregation.

The Haitian congregation has adopted First Church's logo with the amendment that they

are Nashville First Church of the Nazarene, Congregation Haitienne. Dr Samuel receives only a housing allowance of about \$6,000 a year. The congregation did pledge \$3,500 to the joint Faith Promise commitment this past year. The congregation meets four times during the week and joint services between the two congregations take place four times a year.

Indeed, this arrangement has been so positive, that we are open to working with other congregations on a similar basis. Our church has an alternate service to the homeless and the neighboring poor. We are also contemplating a new ministry to address the postmoderns. And we are open to an Hispanic ministry, if we could find the right leadership.

I am offering an example of our statement of agreement, a copy of their logo, and the congregational report of July 2009 to include in my report (found in the appendices).”

## **II.2 Nashville First Haitian Church of the Nazarene (Report by Dr Maromy Samuel, Assistant Pastor)**

“The Haitian Congregation at Nashville First Church of the Nazarene came to existence in 2000, when the immigrants began to explore opportunities in Nashville. They first started with prayer meetings and then came the idea to join an existing American church, but as an alternate service. Finally, they identified a local mission from Atlanta, which agreed to host them.

Because of their varying religious backgrounds and other doctrinal issues, some of members left the original group to start other congregations. Now, we number three Haitian churches in Nashville with about 250 members.

Nashville First Church of the Nazarene is a blessing for the Haitians. As a mother church, it supports the congregation in every way. Many of the members earn only an average salary and

so are unable to support themselves, pay a pastor, finance a building, and cover the utilities of a congregation.

God was at work before planting the Haitian church here. With the help of Pastor Dale Benson, who had befriended many Haitians and worked with them in a multicultural setting in Florida and, with the vision of Dr. Gary Henecke, the board voted last year to include the Haitian Congregation officially as part of Nashville First Church of the Nazarene. Now we are one church worshipping as two different congregations. To God be the glory!

When the earthquake first hit Haiti, the church provided moral and spiritual support for the Haitians. They sponsored my medical trip in April, 2010, to go and assist the displaced victims from the earthquake. Also, the church became one of the local centers for the collection of crisis care kits to ship to Miami and then on to Haiti.

The congregation is working fine. Since I came here in July 2008 to complete my Master’s degree in theological studies and serve as associate pastor, I have seen the church making some significant progress. Last year, we bought our first new musical instruments, a church van, and office furniture set. We reorganized the financial structure and the Sunday School and also facilitated a greater dialogue with the American congregation.

We are working on several programs to train leaders for Sunday School, to record our Sunday service to put it on the web, so that people can listen to our services online. We are reaching out to the community through Bible studies at home and other cultural and community events. Through the English as a Second Language program, we are reaching out to other communities. Also, we are developing a project, which will allow us to walk in the footsteps of Nehemiah to become more efficient in rebuilding the walls of

the homeland through medical and educational missions and other community services.

Overall, the ministry is making a difference in transforming lives and a generation for Christ. We will be self-sustaining despite many challenges. In the near future, the pastor may need to be full-time in order to devote more time to leading the congregation to accomplish what the Lord calls them to do, as the first Haitian Nazarene church in Tennessee. With the help of God, a clear vision, and the support of the mother church, the congregation is moving ahead into the future.”

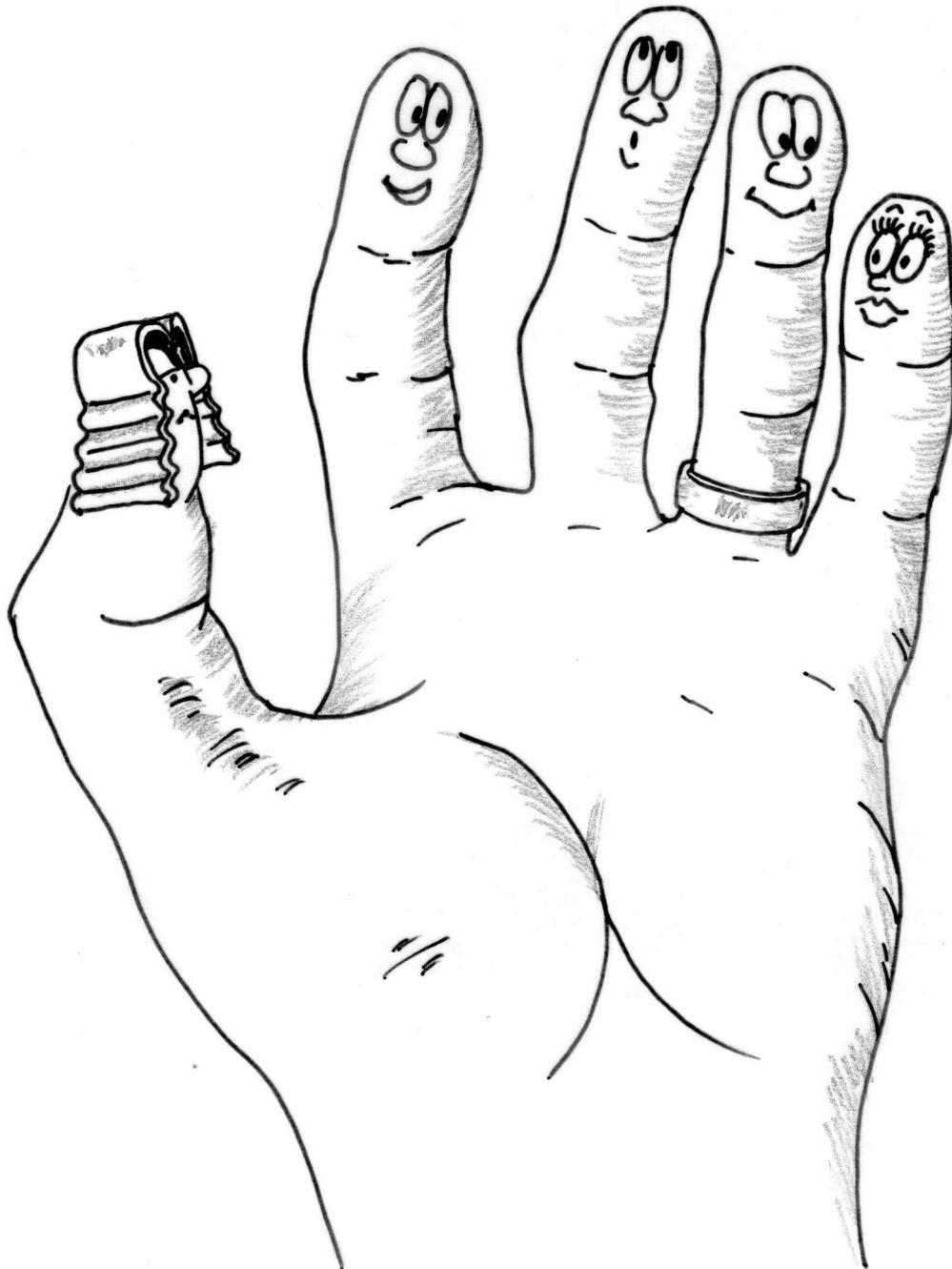
In both Fort Wayne and Nashville, the arrangements appear very positive. In both instances, there are affirming relationships between the leaders of both congregations, good support from the respective boards, and mutual feelings of loyalty to the whole. Both sponsoring congregations feel that the investment has already paid good dividends and have little interest in changing the arrangements.

George Yancey, after studying successful multiracial congregations, concluded that there were seven significant principles that each seemed to have in generous measure. They were: 1. Inclusive Worship; 2. Diverse Leadership; 3. Overarching Goal; 4. Intentionality; 5. Conducive Location; 6. Personal Skills; 7. Adaptability. Though these were drawn from multiracial ministries, leaders that work well together between congregations may well share several of these characteristics, as seen in the testimonials above.

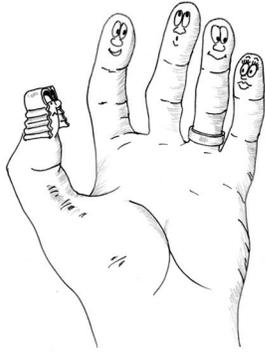
Both arrangements are rather young and for the time being, seem secure. One wonders what issues ten or twenty years might bring, with growth and attrition, demographic and potential leadership changes. One only hopes that the leadership skills, the congregational commitments, and the shared visions will continue to grow the ministries in ways that further enhance the Kingdom of God.

## Chapter Twelve:

# Open the Doors and See all the People



“The people, congested down below, ducking dust and dirt, were both annoyed and astonished. Jesus didn’t seem bothered in the least. The mat, holding a choking Zebedee, was passed down to those below who, in turn, lowered the weight down to the floor in front of Jesus. Within minutes, Zebedee was both physically and spiritually healed and a dissident group attending the miracle subsequently got mad. Healings were not supposed to happen this way.”



# Open the Doors and See all the People

One must see the big picture of where the Kingdom is going. If, as Tom Skinner used to say, our churches are to be “colonies of heaven,” then we need to organize and conduct ourselves not as we have been, but as we shall be. We anticipate the future and structure ourselves for the transition.

Below are two ways of seeing our need for cooperative, diverse leadership to convey the message of the Gospel to a world that longs for the Church to think outside the box.

### The Parable of the Four Fingers

The four fingers were having a rousing argument as to who was the most important of all. To settle their claims, they enlisted Judge Thumb and brought their quarrel to him.

He silenced them stating that he would make a decision on the basis of the persuasive, rational argument of each one. “Pointing finger” was first and eloquently argued that he was the most important by virtue of the fact that, when he signaled directions by pointing left, right, or straight ahead, human beings were compelled to follow. The other fingers applauded its report that obviously made sense.

Middle finger without standing up, declared passionately that his credentials were quite obvious --- he was head and shoulders taller than

the others were. Again the group admitted the obvious. Ring finger then arose and described how human beings, in their most glorious moments, so many times embellish her with their finest jewelry and diamond rings. The competitors acknowledge this truth.

Finally, little finger proudly stretched upward her small frame. The others hushed, wondering what she might say. With confidence, she described human beings, their emotions, whims and passions and then, pounding the fist onto the table, they used her as the point of contact, bearing the brunt of their violent reactions, as the finger under the others suffered the expressive blows. She must be the most important, to convey such feelings! The other fingers saw her graphic point.

All faces turned to the judge to render his decision. He stood up and in regal voice declared: “I have listened to your convincing arguments and have been duly impressed with your individual credentials. However, I have one last request of each of you, before I render a final decision. To my left, is a large Bible; I want each of you to reach over and grab it, then secure it high for the world to see.”

One by one, they tried to grab it, only to have it slip away. It was just too big and they, too clumsy, to be able to control it. Then the truth

dawned on each of them. They all needed to grasp it together to be able to life it high to a hungry world.

### **A Revisionist Story of the Paralyzed Man: Luke 5:17-26**

Zebedee was a quadriplegic. He had been since an ugly fishing accident. Without benefit of technology or social services, he had become essentially a pariah on society. But those days featured a slower and kinder society that tolerated and accommodated the damaged misfits that so generously populated it.

It was a culture not quite as self-conscious as our own, about one's unproductiveness. Normally each citizen would eke out an existence that would provide for his or her own needs, but not much more. In this case, Zebedee was left out in the cold.

His condition demanded help. His family reluctantly fed, clothed and occasionally shaved and cleansed him. He could, but there were few wanting to listen. In his normal isolation, he didn't have much to talk about other than uttering tiring pleas for help.

Paralysis creates inactivity which, in turn, stimulates weight gain. Zebedee was grossly overweight. His untoned flesh seemed to invade the space around. If they could drag him out to beg, they would. But, most of the time, it was hardly worth the effort.

The news pierced the shabby little house with hope that morning. Jesus, shaman or magician, maybe even the hope of Israel, was passing through town. The family, exhausted in serving a hopeless Zebedee, suddenly chattered hopefully that maybe Jesus could make a difference. Maybe the prophet would give him a needed scolding, tell him to be more productive, or maybe just change his negative attitude. But none of

them even dared to think of a miracle.

Zebedee was too obese to move. One family member tried and almost jiggled him off the mat. In frustration, he called out to a passerby, a man of color, who consented to help. But the two of them still didn't have enough muscle power! A Latino volunteered to help. But between the three of them, the balance just wasn't right. A Native American grabbed the empty corner, and an Asian joined in, rounding out the team. The family member happily took over the role of directing the movement and traffic through the gathering gawking crowd.

The distance to the home where Jesus had stopped, almost exhausted them. Zebedee kept mouthing off about being such a public spectacle. He wanted help, but in a more secret, subtle way.

As they approached the house, it became apparent that other visitors had more pressing needs or were monopolizing Jesus' attention. It was clear that the path inside was blocked.

Worse yet, his disciples thought it their responsibility to serve as "gatekeepers," to fend off the pressing crowd. Repeatedly, one could hear them shoot back, "The Master is too busy to attend to you as this time." Were they lying or was this Master not all he was cracked up to be?

The men temporarily laid down their growing, grunting burden and discussed alternative strategies. The conversation was awkward, given cultural and linguistic differences. But they finally settled on a solution. One had brought along his artisan tools, tucked away above his hip pocket. Another had some evident managerial and organizational skills. It was he who suggested the outdoor staircase. Another had been a student of physics and intuitively knew how to angle deadweight up the narrow, open stairs. Another flexed brute strength, necessary to shoulder the

weight on the bottom end. The remaining team member gave it the “heave-ho” spirit of encouragement that made even a plan as crazy as this, sound feasible.

Together they devised strategies with brute strength and dogged persistence to, step-by-step, raise their impossible load up to the roof. At times, their burden almost teetered and toppled. But the combination of people power and individual contributions saved the day, and salvaged Zebedee’s neck.

On settling in on the roof, they briefly lowered their load, while the man with the tools shamelessly chipped and chopped away a large portion of it, an unfortunate necessity that created no little consternation on the part of the host downstairs, who had wanted nothing more than a nice cultured garden party.

The people, congested down below, ducking dust and dirt, were both annoyed and astonished. Jesus didn’t seem bothered in the least. The mat, holding a choking Zebedee, was passed down to those below who, in turn, lowered the

weight down to the floor in front of Jesus. Within minutes, Zebedee was both physically and spiritually healed and a dissident group attending the miracle subsequently got mad. Healings were not supposed to happen this way.

No problem! Zebedee was one happy man! And his newfound friends had themselves a new intercultural camaraderie and a great story to tell over coffee and time.

So the question is, “Who is Zebedee?”

And the answer may be, we suspect, that he is the Church. A Church that desperately needs all from “every nation, tribe, people and language” to share mutual needs, unify around common mission, share wondrous stories of joint grace, and celebrate abundant healing from the paralysis of habits, security, and ease.

Perhaps birthing, sponsoring, and nurturing new ethnic churches can offer a tangible stimulus and structure for us to better discover Jesus and the healing that only comes from him!