

City Harvest Church



Senior Pastor Bob MacGregor

The purpose of the study was to identify transferable principles and practices used by churches that have been successful in attracting and assimilating unchurched people. The following is a summary of a leadership interview, three new Christian interviews, a survey of printed materials and an on site visit.

Question #1. What principles and practices used by these churches have been most successful in attracting and evangelizing unchurched people?

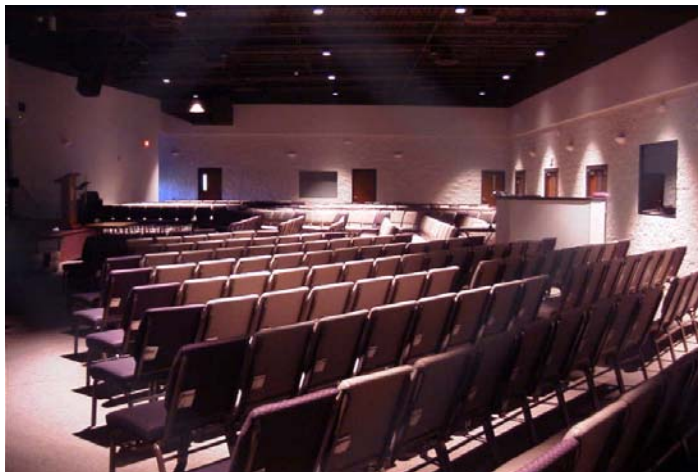
Pastor Bob MacGregor founded City Harvest Church in the Fall of 1997 after serving on the pastoral staff of City Bible Church [formerly Bible Temple] for 15 years. In just over three years the church has built a beautiful new building where over 650 attend weekly worship on the weekend. People are attracted to City Harvest because it has an intense spiritual environment and yet a relaxed demeanor. “Our style is a very intense Charismatic but I would have a David Letterman style of interacting with the crowd—being relaxed and not taking myself too seriously,” says Pastor MacGregor.



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There are two targeted groups that City Harvest is trying to reach in Clark County. “First, we are definitely a community church,” states MacGregor. “We are not metropolitan at all. We are focused on trying to reach Clark County with the gospel. We want to be able to share the gospel with every single person in Clark County with whatever means we can. Second are the needy of the area. From the ‘get-go’ we wanted to target people who are what we would call the working poor—people who are under distress, people who are struggling. We also reach out to misplaced Christians—people who weren’t working well in churches or bouncing from church to church—even churches that really didn’t want them because they were troublemakers.”

City Harvest is very serious about mobilizing its members to build relationships with unsaved people, to share Christ with them and to invite them into the fellowship of the church. Pastor MacGregor explains, “We preach very strongly about counteracting what is known as the ‘RLI syndrome.’ I believe it started with Wesley. It’s where people get ‘redeemed’, they get ‘lifted’ out of sin and they get ‘isolated’. Most people give their life to Christ in the context of someone they know. In fact, 86% of all those who give their life to Christ, receive Christ through a person who was not a relational stranger—it comes through a mom, a dad, a brother or sister, a cousin, neighbor, fellow worker, fellow student—someone they relationally can trust.” Pastor MacGregor states that there is a value system that a pastor has to implant into his people that it is a moral responsibility that they live to touch people. “If we are not doing that, we are not really coming into maturity in Christ. I always say that the reason Christ wants us to share our faith is not to see people won to Christ, but to cause us to become like Him. Jesus said, ‘follow me and I will make you fishers of men.’ If you are not fishing, you are not following.”



Outreach events and activities have been part of City Harvest’s identity from the beginning. Their most recent outreach event, “The Eternity Play,” attracted hundreds of seekers from the area. Their very first outreach activity was held within the first six weeks of starting the church. Pastor MacGregor explained why, “The reason why I did it before we had a lot of things set up is because I wanted to get that ‘DNA’ into people—‘we exist here for the purpose of reaching community, this is what this church is all about.’ We did it by hanging door hangers that basically asked, ‘do you need food? We

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will give you a week's worth of groceries if you call this number.' Do you need a free oil change? We will change your oil for free. I remember we hung them out on a Sunday night at about 5:00. My teenage daughter was at home sleeping when we did it. By about 6:00 PM she was awakened to phone calls. Probably within an hour we had 75 phone call returns to our personal phone number. She was almost overcome not knowing what to do. Well we didn't want the people to grab and run so we made appointment for them to come get their food. One of our workers asked me to come and explain to one of the people what our church was like. So I said, 'Well, it's a place where you can feel the presence of God and experience it.' I said, 'Do you believe in the existence of God?' She broke down and cried and said, 'after today I do.' So we really want to touch people with the love of God before we give them the gospel."

"We wanted to do safe outreaches," stated MacGregor. "Outreaches where a person is not going to feel like they failed because they didn't win someone to Christ. We offer risk-free ways to practically touch people with the love of God. If it has done nothing else, it has spread the seed of the gospel and it raised the outreach consciousness in the church that made it more open to seeing people get saved and added to the church."

Another way in which City Harvest encourages their people to reach out is through cell groups. "We are very much a cell-oriented church," states Pastor MacGregor. They call their cells House Churches and each cell is expected to do evangelistic and service outreach activities.



Even the name City Harvest has outreach implied in it. Once a month the church has an outreach called "City of Light." The first "City of Light" was last February. Keith Cain is a good example of who the church is seeking to attract through the "City of Light" outreach. Keith explains, "I used to be into drugs and all kinds of stuff like that. I was just at my friend's house staying the night and we were going to the store to get some food. A couple of these guys were standing at the store handing out these tickets to Christian music thing. I'd never been to church before and I didn't believe in God. If I go to hell or go to heaven, 'that cool' I didn't care about anything. I just cared about myself more than anything. I got this ticket, and this guy said, 'there will be free pizza there.' And I thought, 'cool, I'm a big guy, I like pizza.' So that's what I went for, free pizza. He didn't tell me I had to sit through some worship and listen to this guy speak."

Keith continues, "The music I used to listen to was hard core rock, just like screaming and stuff. I'd never experienced any kind of worship music and I thought, 'this is kinda cool.' The speaker just shared the gospel and he said God could take away

your problems and I thought, 'yeah, I want God to take away my problems.' He had everybody bow their head and he had people raise their hand if they wanted God to take away their problems. I raised my hand and my friend next to me raised his hand. Then the speaker said, okay, if you meant that come up on the stage and he said the sinner's prayer with me. In that minute I knew that God changed my life because I haven't done drugs since, and that has been nine months. I don't drink any more, I don't have the desire in me to smoke and get wasted every day. I started going to church and youth group. The first two months I was saved I read the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Then I got baptized in the Holy Spirit and I started reading the Bible again and realized why people highlight it. So I read it again. It took me three and half or four months that time because I just picked it apart. So I've read the Bible two-time since I've been saved. In March I got baptized in water. God is so good. He's just been taking my life, that I thought was so worthless, and He's totally changed my life."

Question #2. How do these churches welcome and follow-up unchurched visitors and new converts?

Visitors to City Harvest are followed-up with a phone call. After four or five weeks of attendance guests are invited to a welcome banquet at the church where cell leaders serve as hosts for each of the tables. The banquet, which is offered every two months, provides an introduction to City Harvest and a time for questions and answers.

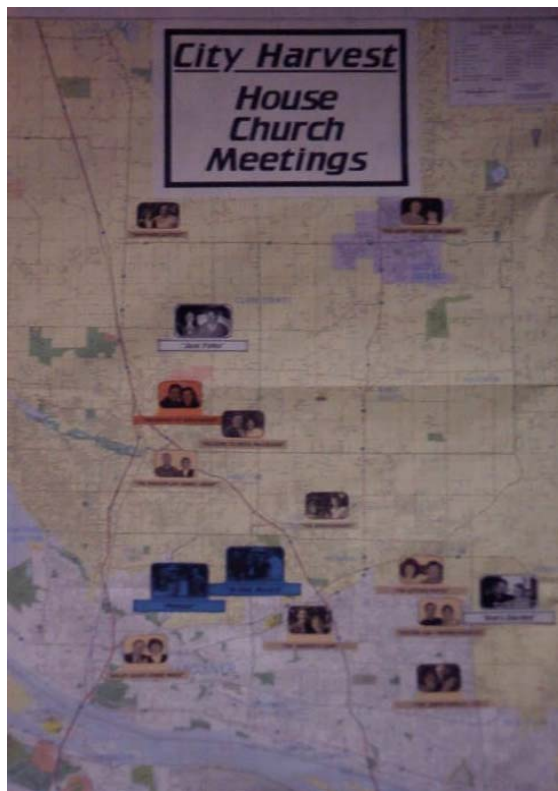
City Harvest makes use of an "altar call" for inviting people to make a public commitment to Jesus Christ. They have 50 altar workers available to pray with people who respond to the invitation to come forward in the church service and accept Christ. The altar worker who prays with the new convert continues to follow-up with them one-on-one for three weeks or until they get connected in a cell group. The goal is that within three weeks, new converts will cover three simple booklets with the discipler, be water baptized, receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and begin attending a cell group. Pastor MacGregor tracks the discipleship efforts of these altar workers and serves as their coach using a seventeen point "Follow-up Questionnaire." The ultimate goal is to have a one year, one-on-one new convert follow-up where they are in a cell group with a house church pastor, a zone pastor and a 1-1 discipler providing care and guidance.

Question #3. How do these churches provide an opportunity for new people to gain a sense of belonging?

The "House Church" is the foundation for belonging and fellowship at City Harvest. Covenant relationships in small groups is a core value of the church. Pastor MacGregor comments, "I joke with the people, 'if you don't like cells, if you don't like house churches, if you don't like gathering with people in a home and having relationships that way and using your gifts to serve them, it would like going to a Baptist church and not liking baptism by immersion. You're in the wrong place.' The value of being involved in a house church is constantly being reinforced." MacGregor explains, "We are even going to have our house church pastors do baby dedications in front of the

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church. So if people want community support they are going to have to be identified with a small group in order to get that.” Participation in a cell is an expectation of church members at City Harvest. In addition to attending the ten-week Foundations Class new members must sign a commitment that they will identify with a cell group.



Question #4. How do these churches see that people are disciplined into fully devoted followers of Christ?

“We are very committed to raising up leadership,” explains MacGregor. “You can’t have a ‘body-ministry centered church’ without developing people. So, I believe my primary purpose is to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry.” In addition to the cell group meetings and the Foundations Class, City Harvest offers enrichment and equipping classes on Wednesday evenings and a one-year training track for leaders.

Question #5. How do these churches help people take up the responsibility to serve in personal ministry?

As soon as there is a commitment to the Foundations Class, newcomers are encouraged to consider finding a place of service. For those attending a house church, it is automatic, because house churches do ushering, greeting and hospitality after each worship service on a rotating schedule that repeats about every six weeks. This allows the members of the cell to serve as a unit along with other cell groups. Cells also seek to

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find service opportunities through outreach within their neighborhood and within the community.

Map/ Photos:



Assimilation Study - Participant Information (Fall 2000)

Church Name City Harvest Church Region Vancouver, WA
Street Address 8100 NW 9th Ave.
City Vancouver State WA Zip Code 98665
Phone 360-546-1000 FAX 360-546-3710
Email chc.cityharvestchurch.com Web site www.cityharvestchurch.com

1. Denomination Independent Charismatic
2. Date church was founded September 1997
3. Founding Senior Pastor Bob MacGregor Years in this church 3
4. Current Senior Pastor Bob MacGregor Years in this church 3
5. Average Weekend Worship attendance 700 (12/2000)
6. Average number of visitors each Sunday 12 (12/2000)
7. Current Membership 700 (12/2000)
 - Adults 325 (12/2000)
 - Youth 175 (12/2000)
 - Children 200 (12/2000)
8. Number of conversions during the past 12 months 100 (12/2000)
9. Number of new members received during the past 12 months 275 (12/2000)
 - Number from transfer (previously active in another church) 225 (12/2000)
 - Number from conversion (or with no previous church affiliation) 50 (12/2000)
10. Christian Education Classes
 - # of Adult Classes 1 Weekly attendance 30
 - # of Youth Classes 1 Weekly attendance 25
 - # of Children Classes 4 Weekly attendance 80
11. Small Groups/Cells
 - # of Adult Groups 15 Weekly attendance 250
 - # of Youth Groups 1 Weekly attendance 20
 - # of Children Groups _____ Weekly attendance _____
12. Large groups meeting midweek
 - Youth Ministry 1 Weekly attendance 115
 - Children Ministry _____ Weekly attendance 56
 - Women's Ministry 2 Weekly attendance 30
 - Men's Ministry _____ Weekly attendance ?
 - Other Ministry _____ Weekly attendance _____
 - Other Ministry _____ Weekly attendance _____
13. Number of people with an identifiable ministry _____ Or approximate % 50%
14. Number of core lay leaders _____ Number of paid pastoral/ministry staff 3
15. Number of churches planted by the church 0
16. Describe your congregation's socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural distinctions:
 - Caucasian