

Participant Summary: “Attracting and Assimilating the Unchurched in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”  
A study of leading churches in the Portland/Vancouver area.

## Faith Center Church



Associate Pastor, Monty Carroll,  
worship and follow-up

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?

Faith Center Church is currently located by K-Mart in what had been a large restaurant with a bar and dance floor. The building has been beautifully remodeled into a



large sanctuary, offices, youth area and nursery. The church has targeted young families, college age through their mid forties. They find that they are attracting self-motivated people, business owners and success driven people. Visitors have often come because of

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the personal invitation of a friend or family member who has experienced true life-change at Faith Center.

The worship is upbeat and contemporary and Pastor Glen Johnson offers straight preaching, honest and open without watering anything down. At the end of most worship services people are invited to come forward for prayer for salvation. "We think that is extremely important," explains Pastor Monty Carroll. "Even at times when we think that the message had nothing to do with salvation, we still get a great response just because they are in a place where spiritual activity is going on and they can feel the draw, the pull, they feel the call. So we make sure we do provide an invitation for salvation. And that's where our follow-up program begins really, with people who do come forward."



Faith Center has also mobilized members for evangelistic outreach through cell groups, service projects and big events. The cell group ministry started January 2000 and is currently the primary evangelistic tool. Service projects have included free gift-wrap at Wal-Mart and the "giving tree" for needy kids in the community. The drama ministry, Eternal Vision, creates plays like "Winnie the Pooh" with a Christian spin on it. Another outreach event is a community Easter egg hunt for children. This past year they supplied 30,000 Easter eggs.

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

Guests at Faith Center will find plenty of parking because leaders and members are urged to park at a distance so that visitor can park close to the entrance. Guests are given a welcome packet and a registration coupon that they can exchange for a free tape and espresso. A lay volunteer gives visitors a welcome phone call during the week following their visit. Pastor Monty Carroll also calls to invite them to a cell group and ask what their experience was at church. He answers any questions they have about the ministries they are interested in and prays with them regarding any prayer requests that they may have written on their communication card.

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“When people come forward in the sanctuary we have prayer partners that come forward and stand behind them. Pastor Glen challenges the people to not just make a decision today but make a commitment. ‘If you really mean business that’s how you change your life—you keep coming back, you rub shoulders with believers.’ And then he says, ‘turn around there is a prayer partner behind you.’ And they take them just off the sanctuary to a room where they pray with them. There are so many things that people come forward for. So rather than try to sift through it right there we take them and pray for them individually.”



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

When it comes to gaining a sense of belong, Pastor Carroll states, “We depend on the cell group. It becomes it’s own little family of believers. If you can get people where they feel important and part of a cell group, that goes a long way. We also encourage new people to volunteer in positions in the church that need their help.”

Membership is an entry point of belonging at Faith Center. Rather than requiring a high level of commitment, the church encourages membership as a starting point then hope that the new members will take on more responsibilities. “The real focus of the membership class is that ‘we are here for you,’” explains Pastor Carroll. He tells them, “This church is not here to be just another church, but it is here for people and you are those people.” Membership does require commitment at Faith Center. Members are expected to get involved in ministry, attend worship, be in a cell group and tithe.

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

Faith Center offers a spiritual growth path called the “Discipleship Diamond.” This program is designed to give members training in basic Bible doctrine, practical tips

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on how to live the Christian life and training to equip members to become stronger Christians and potential leaders. First base, called "Christianity 101," is for new believers. "Leaving the Past Behind" is like a mini "Cleansing Stream Ministries." It is a short seminar that is offered on the base path between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> base and held on a Friday night and all day Saturday. "People really get rid of the past and really focus on their new life in Christ. It's been really effective," states Pastor Carroll. Second base, "Discipleship 201," teaches foundational doctrine and victorious living in Christ. "Christianity 301," a 12-week class, equips members to be leaders in cell groups. This is followed by the "Champions Retreat" which challenges people to take on a high position of leadership in the church.

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

"We want to get people involved," states Pastor Carroll. "We think that a real key element in getting people to stay is that they are actually doing something. Then they feel that they have worth, they have purpose. So much of the time in the world you spend your life without purpose. Once you connect people with purpose, you have them."

Faith Center provides training and equipping for all levels of ministry involvement. "We feel like training is vital to the success of every department," states Carroll. "If you just put someone in a position without training, even if they know what to do, if they don't know the vision or if they don't know why they are doing it, it tends to be detrimental rather than helpful. So we maintain a good leadership network with strong training in every department."

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**Map/ Photos:**



### Assimilation Study - Participant Information (Fall 2000)

Church Name Faith Center Church Region Vancouver, WA  
Street Address 2533 NE Andresen Road  
City Vancouver State WA Zip Code 98661  
Phone 360-253-2484 FAX 360-254-6102  
Web site [www.faith-center.org](http://www.faith-center.org)

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1. Denomination non-denominational
2. Date church was founded December 1982
3. Founding Senior Pastor Glen Johnson Years in this church 18
4. Current Senior Pastor Glen Johnson Years in this church 18
5. Average Weekend Worship attendance 500
6. Average number of visitors each Sunday 10
7. Current Membership 900
  - Adults 500
  - Youth 100
  - Children 300
8. Number of conversions during the past 12 months 245
9. Number of new members received during the past 12 months 120
  - Number from transfer (previously active in another church) --
  - Number from conversion (or with no previous church affiliation) --
10. Christian Education Classes
  - # of Adult Classes 3 Weekly attendance 50
  - # of Youth Classes 3 Weekly attendance 75
  - # of Children Classes 6 Weekly attendance 250
11. Small Groups/Cells
  - # of Adult Groups 18 Weekly attendance 300
  - # of Youth Groups 1 Weekly attendance 75
  - # of Children Groups \_\_\_\_\_ Weekly attendance \_\_\_\_\_
12. Large groups meeting midweek
  - Youth Ministry \_\_\_\_\_ Weekly attendance 75
  - Children Ministry \_\_\_\_\_ Weekly attendance 100
  - Women's Ministry \_\_\_\_\_ Weekly attendance 40
  - Men's Ministry monthly Monthly attendance 60
  - Other Ministry \_\_\_\_\_ Weekly attendance \_\_\_\_\_
  - Other Ministry \_\_\_\_\_ Weekly attendance \_\_\_\_\_
13. Number of people with an identifiable ministry 250 Or approximate % 50%
14. Number of core lay leaders 50 Number of paid pastoral/ministry staff 10
15. Number of churches planted by the church 1
16. Describe your congregation's socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural distinctions:
  - White, Anglo
  - Middle – upper middle class