

Mt. Olivet Baptist Church



Senior Pastor, James E. Martin



Associate Pastor, Ron Bronski

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?

Mt. Olivet is a multi-cultural though predominately Afro-American church located in north Portland. The church’s outreach is built on personal relationships. Pastor of Evangelism, Ron Bronski states, “You are going to feel welcome here and you are going to get good teaching and you are going to get checked up on—somebody is going to care about you. I think those are the primary reasons people are attracted to Mt. Olivet.” All of the new Christians interviewed had come to Mt. Olivet as the result of a personal invitation. They also commented on how they felt welcomed and cared for. “We rely heavily on our church members, our congregation, doing their part to reach others for Christ.”



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

Another means of outreach employed by Mt. Olivet is urban ministries. “We believe in reaching adults through their children and so we have an after school program that reaches out to first through fifth graders,” explains Bronski. “And we have a literacy club that meets on Thursday nights which helps kids with their schoolwork and motivates them to read. It’s a one-on-one program so that they are hooked up with one Christian with one child. Through that we try to meet their parents and invite them to come to church.”

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

Mt. Olivet is known for its welcoming atmosphere, strong worship services and good teaching by Senior Pastor James E. Martin. “We try to keep a real nonthreatening environment--not putting any pressure on people when they come in. Also, our ushers do a great job of welcoming people,” stated Bronski. One new Christian described Mt. Olivet this way, “The church is friendly. I felt right at home here, I felt like I belonged here the first time I came.”

Those who make spiritual commitments are followed-up by small group leaders who seek to develop a personal relationship with them and include them in the group. “We try to plug them into a cell leader. He in turn will call them. They get personal contact and follow-up. It is pretty aggressive. It is not just a one-time phone call. It’s more the beginning of a relationship.”



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

Mt. Olivet has recently restructured itself as a cell church in order to increase its effectiveness in fulfilling the Great Commission. It seeks to form strong relationships within the church and to reach out to unchurched friends and family. Pastor Bronski states, “We rely so strongly on our members reaching out to others, we are hoping that they have a relationship before they ever come to a worship service.”

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

Ongoing discipleship and personal care are provided by personal mentoring within the cell group. The groups meet together each week to study questions written by Pastor Martin that relate to the sermons from the previous weekend.

Mt. Olivet provides the fundamentals of the faith through going around the base path. Bronski explains, “The on deck circle is for anyone who wants to know about our church. It’s our membership orientation, which is offered twice a month. If they decide that they want to become a member then they can start the path. First, we’ll see if they have been baptized, if not, we encourage them to be baptized. Then they go through Class 101, Foundations, which is six lessons that are fundamental things for the Christian faith. During the Encounter weekend they will go off and deal with issues in their life. Advanced Discipleship, Class 201, is 12 weeks. It continues to cover fundamental issues for Christian living as well as the mission and vision for our church. Network is our spiritual gift discovery class. Then Class 301, Leadership Training, is a 12-week class to prepare people to lead a cell. Finally, the Contagious Christian course will teach them how to reach others for Christ. The classes can actually be taken in any order, we just want to be sure that they are in the classes.” Classes 101 and 201 are offered twice a week—Sundays and Wednesdays. Contagious Christian and Network are offered once every other month in a Friday evening and all day Saturday format.



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

Newcomers are encouraged to serve immediately in entry-level positions: parking lot, kitchen, and things that don’t require spiritual maturity. Cell leadership, however, is an example of a ministry that requires completion of the “base path” which takes several months.

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A study of leading churches in the Portland/Vancouver area.

Map/ Photos:



Assimilation Study - Participant Information (Fall 2000)

Church Name Mt. Olivet Baptist Region North Portland
Street Address 8501 N. Chautauqua Blvd.
City Portland State OR Zip Code 97217
Phone 503-240-7729 FAX 503-285-4668
Web site www.mtolivet.com

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1. Denomination American Baptist
 2. Date church was founded 1907
 3. Founding Senior Pastor _____ Years in this church _____
 4. Current Senior Pastor James E. Martin Years in this church 13
 5. Average Weekend Worship attendance 1400
 6. Average number of visitors each Sunday 10-20
 7. Current Membership 2175
 - Adults 1820
 - Youth 125
 - Children 130
 8. Number of conversions during the past 12 months 79
 9. Number of new members received during the past 12 months 231
 - Number from transfer (previously active in another church) 41
 - Number from conversion (or with no previous church affiliation) 190
 10. Christian Education Classes
 - # of Adult Classes 6 Weekly attendance 215
 - # of Youth Classes 6 Weekly attendance 105
 - # of Children Classes 8 Weekly attendance 200
 11. Small Groups/Cells
 - # of Adult Groups 50 Weekly attendance 350
 - # of Youth Groups 4 Weekly attendance varies
 - # of Children Groups 8 Weekly attendance varies
 12. Large groups meeting midweek
 - Youth Ministry 1 Weekly attendance 120
 - Children Ministry 2 Weekly attendance 210
 - Women's Ministry 2 Weekly attendance 80
 - Men's Ministry 2 Weekly attendance 60
 - Other Ministry _____ Weekly attendance _____
 - Other Ministry _____ Weekly attendance _____
 13. Number of people with an identifiable ministry 450 Or approximate % 21%
 14. Number of core lay leaders 183 Number of paid pastoral/ministry staff 26
 15. Number of churches planted by the church 1
 16. Describe your congregation's socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural distinctions:
 - Predominately African-American (90-95%)
 - Upper middle class and below