

MAKING GOOD IDEAS HAPPEN

How to Help Your People Unleash Their Best Innovations

by Krista Petty

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Pretend you are the pastor of your church (if you're not). You've had a service event that empowered large numbers to serve in your community, small groups are engaging in community ministry, and your church is pairing up volunteers with public schools and nonprofits to serve on an ongoing basis. Now something new is starting to happen: people are developing their own ministry ideas and service partnerships—with or without staff leadership. Mary and Harry catch you between services and say, "We know the church does a lot of ministry in the community and we have been so blessed in serving with the crisis pregnancy center. But we have noticed something missing and we have a real passion to develop something new that fills this gap we've seen. Can we sit down and share our ideas with you over coffee this week?" You want to meet with them, but perhaps with a blend of both excitement and trepidation. Of course, they don't see that as you pat Harry on the back, affirming, "Well, that's great! I can't wait to hear about it." You set a date for the meeting.

On the drive home, you feel guilty about being worried over the conversation with these passionate innovators. You should be excited that they feel called, led and passionate about something, but a long list of "what ifs" are clouding your excitement...

What if this takes more of my time than one simple coffee?

What if this idea is a bad idea? How will I tell them?

What if it's a good idea, but they ask for budget money?

What if this idea detracts them from their current service? How will I replace them?

Scary? Yes! Because it's normally the pastor's role to be the vision caster, innovator and instigator. Exciting? Absolutely! Because churches moving to the next levels of externally focused ministries are finding that the most successful ministries are those where vision and plans are *shared by staff and volunteers*. Innovative ideas for ministry are not reserved for the professional minister, but put into the heart of every Christ-follower as Paul writes in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to

do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

If God prepared everyone in advance for something, how do leaders help people find that *something*? Once found, how do you initiate meaningful advancement for the kingdom of God? With limited resources, how do leaders know where to invest? To move a good idea to boots on the ground means a commitment to leadership development, effective brainstorming, openness to creativity and the courage for leaders to multiply into teams.

Flipping the Paradigm of Leadership

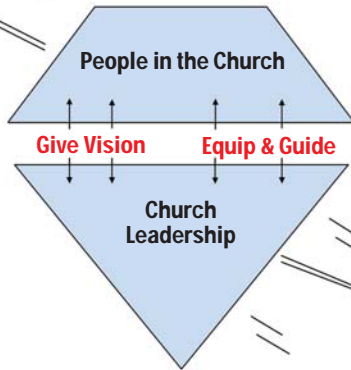
As your church has effectively churned the service experience, then like cream rising, the innovators and passionate go-getters may also be rising to the top. It may feel like your church's leadership model and structure is turning upside down. Like any organization, churches sometimes follow a mentality of top-down leadership. The senior minister, staff or leadership are paid to come up with the vision and direction, followed by the events, activities and programs to make the vision a reality. Often, leaders have the ideas and together with the people, they do the work.



Breakthrough churches are discovering a new model of successful leadership to equip individuals to live out their specific good work God has prepared them to do. "Either Ephesians

2:10 is reserved specifically for those chosen few staff members, or it is for everyone. I believe it is not exclusive, but intended for everyone—young, old, ordained or lay leaders,” says Eric Swanson, Externally Focused Churches Leadership Community director for Leadership Network.

The same way, let your light shine before men...



*...that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven!
Matthew 5:16*

Rather than a triangular organization with top-down results, shared-vision leadership can present itself more like a diamond as both leaders and individuals shine with vision and passion to reflect blessing to the community. As individuals are impassioned with service ideas, successful church leaders will not be the only keepers of the vision; they will also serve as a conduit

and encouragement for helping others develop in Christ and for community ministry benefit. “Unless we invest our lives in the good works that God has created for us, we will experience a feeling of emptiness,” Eric says. “We hear lots of personal stories about how people find salvation in Christ. Shouldn’t we also hear lots of personal stories about people fulfilling the good works that God has created for them to do?” The healthiest organizations are learning organizations where

anybody can contribute. Ideas are not evaluated by who gives them but by how valuable they are against the mission.

SHOULDN’T WE HEAR STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE FULFILLING THE GOOD WORKS THAT GOD HAS CREATED FOR THEM TO DO?

Meet Donna and Her Blankets

Calvary Community Church, in Westlake Village, CA (www.calvarycc.org) not only has a passion for people to serve in their community, they are dedicated to equipping people to see their own ministry dreams come to reality. Donna is a stay-at-home mom who loves making blankets. But more than making blankets, she loves sharing them with others in need. She came to the church leaders and asked about starting a ministry.

Calvary has developed an effective system of filtering the numerous ministry start-up requests, resourcing people’s dreams for ministry and helping them sustain it.

“We want to be a liaison for people to do what they are passionate about,” says Michal Galvin, ministry team coordinator and part of Calvary’s Community/World ministry team—which encompasses outreach into the community and the world, including missions.



MICHAL GALVIN

The staff and other leaders at the church have equipped Donna and her blanket ministry in multiple ways. “We help her send out a newsletter to volunteers and other people that sponsor her ministry. We help new volunteers connect to her ministry. We host a mission fair where ministries like Donna’s have a booth to promote what they do and recruit volunteers. This missions fair spans global and local missions. We help Donna with some funding, but equip her to do her own fundraising as well,” says Michal.



ERICA MAHAN

“People come to me with great ideas,” says Erica Mahan, an assistant on the Community/World team. She often finds herself wanting to personally take action on an idea. “But I have to remember that it is about equipping them in their passions and their journey of service.” Erica is about growing dreams, not taking away people’s ideas.



Donna delivering blankets to an orphanage in Mexico.



Donna handing out blankets in the Kumeyaay Indian Village in Mexico.

This church is beginning to live out the new model of shared-vision leadership. They don't facilitate when people come and simply lob ideas into the pot. They work to equip and empower people to own the God-given vision. "It's not about what the church can do for you, or even what you can do for the church. It's about what you can do

through your church," says Erica. Donna's blanket ministry meets together twice a month, but the over 200 people involved in the ministry make most of the blankets at home. In the past year, the ministry has donated 3000 blankets to children in local shelters, the foster care system, foreign orphanages and to exotic locales in need around the globe.

First Steps

When a group or an individual gets a great idea, how does their church help them go from an idea to having boots on the ground? Calvary staff asks individuals interested in starting new ministries to become leaders. The first step for anyone at

the church is to become a member of the church by taking the Discover Calvary Membership Class. "This is a critical path step," says Director of Community Care Kevin McCloskey. The four-hour class taught by the senior pastor outlines the church vision, beliefs and structure, and allows him to share his heart in a venue other than the pulpit.



KEVIN MCCLOSKEY

Following completion of the class and commitment to membership, church staff guides individuals through an application process to start a new ministry. This application not only gives insight to the staff about the potential new leader, it guides the applicant through a series of questions to help them reflect on strengths and weaknesses, passions and purpose. Leader requirements are also clearly defined. Current requirements include the following:

- *Conversion: must have been a Christian for at least two years*
- *Attendance: has regularly attended Calvary for at least six months with some previous serving experience*
- *Membership: has taken the Discover Calvary class and made a commitment to membership*

This church believes that leadership and relationship go hand in hand. "People need to be invited into leadership through relationship. It is vital to the health of Calvary that we put people in leadership that we know. Relationship is the first and foremost way that we can show people we care," reads their Leadership Recommendation Guide.

During the application process, potential new ministry leaders are introduced to New Ministry Steps—a guide to facilitating and starting new programs. This work is not done totally independent from staff, but in partnership with them. Leaders are defined as those lay members with the heart, passion, desire, connectivity, skills and commitment to present, launch and sustain the ministry with only minimal staff involvement as noted on the chart below. Each new leader is paired with a staff team, in this case the Community/World team. The new leader works with the Community/World Team Leader, the Director of Community Care (Kevin McCloskey) or the Pastor of Community/World (Kirk DeWitt) and the Ministry Team Coordinator (Michal Galvin) to start work on the first of several steps.

Offering a clear path to a successful new ministry launch facilitates accountability and teamwork. This path to starting a new ministry was initially developed by the Community/World team at Calvary. As people began to experience service outside the walls of the church, it inspired more innovative culture to emerge in the church. "The New Ministry Steps was formed because we were the first team to be birthing ministries that weren't staff generated. We had a number of ministries start without the chart, and in our trial and error, it became clear that this format worked for us," says Kevin.

Steps to Launching a New Ministry		
Task	Responsible Party	Timeline
Establish ministry proposal (purpose, objectives, plan)	Leader & Community/World staff	
Determine other key leader(s)	Leader	
Identify lay ministry team (Volunteers)	Leaders	
Identify lead staff team	Community/World staff	
Link with other participating teams (as necessary)	Community/World staff	
Establish liaison with staff	Leaders/Teams(s)	
Plan launch and training sessions	Leaders	
Assign tasks by desire/giftedness/availability	Leaders	
Assign points of collection/communication	Leader & Community/World staff	
Promote as necessary (bulletin, web, flyers)	Leader & Community/World staff	
Monitor performance	Community/World staff	

Adapted from the Community/World team at Calvary Community Church

It wasn't long before the other ministries of the church took notice of the leadership development and new volunteer involvement. The entire church has now adopted these steps. It has thrived to the point that a new staff person was recently hired to facilitate this process. Called the new ministry development coordinator, the primary function of this role is to help new ministries get started. "She meets with people interested in new ministry and guides them through the application process. Once a month, she brings the ministry ideas to all the ministry team leaders and does a presentation of the applications for new ministries," says Kevin. The team reviews the applications and answers in one of the following ways:

1. "Yes! Go!"
2. "We're not sure. This idea isn't quite ready."
3. "We want you to be a partner, but this is not necessarily a Calvary Ministry."

Those that are asked not to be a church ministry are usually redirected because, although they may be good and godly ideas, they may not line up with the vision for the church at the time. Sometimes ministries are asked to become partners because they are really ready to be established nonprofits in and of themselves.

The church has been averaging two new ministry ideas presented every month. The Community/World team has seen three ministries go through this process since it was adopted by the church earlier this year. "We don't do ministry without a volunteer leader because leadership development is as important as anything else that we do," concludes Kevin.

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Deciding Where to Invest

There is no end to ideas and innovations for creating new ministry, but sometimes limited resources are the end of a good idea. At **Mariners Church** in Irvine, CA (www.marinerschurch.org) they, too, have come up with a system of deciding which valuable and needed ministry ideas should get investment of staff time, funds and church resources. The externally focused ministry arm of Mariners Church is called Lighthouse Ministries. Lighthouse currently has a number of community ministries, most developed and led by volunteers. "Ministry ideas come to us from several sources," says Laurie Beshore, outreach pastor. Sometimes



LAURIE BESHORE

a member approaches staff with an idea or a staff member sees a gap to be filled. Current events that affect their community may also cause the need for a new ministry. "Sometimes, we can become aware of somewhere God is already using people from Mariners and come alongside them," she continues.

After an idea is born, the Lighthouse staff looks to answer some basic questions, and to equip and empower these enthusiastic new ministry innovators. The goal is always to help them get off the ground and become self-sufficient. Five key questions are asked:

1. *Will this ministry enable us to share God's love and the gospel with those in need?*
2. *Does the community need this ministry?*
3. *Is this ministry consistent with the mission, visions and values of Lighthouse?*
4. *Do we have the volunteer leaders (called champions) capable of developing this ministry?*
5. *Is there opportunity for interaction between volunteers and people in need?*

Tim Keller has been on staff for over two years as Lighthouse director of volunteer-led ministries. Any Lighthouse ministry run by a volunteer is under his care, with just a few exceptions. Along with launching new volunteer-led ministry, his job is to manage existing volunteer-led ministries. That ongoing support includes helping volunteers with guidelines, forms, leadership training, ministry planning and budgeting. "Basically, I am a liaison to the church," says Tim. Ultimately, Tim gives the green light for new Lighthouse ministry launches. All new ideas are brought to the management team, where Tim presents the ideas to process. "It's an opportunity to test the waters," says Tim.

He recently went through this process to help launch an adoption ministry through the church. Using the five questions listed above, Tim says, "My job is to assess if it fits in the Lighthouse mission and vision and if it is called by God." Two families from the church were in the process of

adopting children and they thought they could share what they learned and start a ministry. Here is how Tim worked towards the answer to whether or not this was a viable new ministry start.

Will the adoption ministry enable us to share the gospel? "We don't do good works for the sake of good, but for Christ. We are about having full impact," says Tim. Ultimately, it was clear that Christian families adopting children could lead to having an impact for Christ.

Does the community need this ministry? They wanted to help people adopt one of the over 100 kids looking to be adopted in the community. There was a clear need.

Is this ministry consistent with the mission, vision and values of Lighthouse? The mission statement of Lighthouse Ministry reads, "Serving people who are poor and in need in our community so that all may experience the transforming power of Christ's love." Their vision is to see transformed lives, a transformed church and community. They value:

- *Sharing the Gospel*
- *Relationship-based ministry*
- *Cultivating servant hearts*
- *Empowering leaders*
- *Growing and supporting volunteers*
- *Focusing where God uniquely calls us*
- *Collaborating with ministries that have a similar mission*

The goals of the adoption ministry and the heart of the potential leaders certainly reflected many values of Lighthouse and were consistent with mission and vision.

Do we have volunteer leaders (called champions) capable of developing this ministry? According to Tim, unless God raises up leaders, they don't necessarily start a ministry. "Our staff is here to equip, train and lead. The more I am required to 'do' the less effective in ministry I actually am. We have found that when ministry is volunteer-led it can grow

WHEN MINISTRY
IS VOLUNTEER-LED
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GOD-SIZED.

God-sized. When it is only one person's job on staff, the ministry stays small," says Tim.

The potential leaders of the adoption ministry certainly had the 4C's of ministry leadership they look for in Lighthouse. Tim says that the 4C's are:

Calling – Are they in relationship with God to hear his call?

Character – Is their behavior in keeping with Christ?

Capability – Can they make things happen?

Commitment – Do they have the time and heart for this ministry?

Tim has an unofficial, yet additional 'C' that he looks for. "Chemistry," says Tim. "I look to see if they will fit in and are a good match."

When it comes to volunteers, Tim also wants to know how many people from Mariners they can expect to put into action with the potential new ministry. While answering this question does take some guesswork, the research for the adoption ministry showed that 25% of families consider adoption. Out of those 25%, 75-80% consider going to their church for information. Less than 5% of churches have good information to share. It seemed as if there was opportunity for interest and involvement from a significant enough portion of the congregation to move forward. They also test the waters by putting out some preliminary information to see if there is interest.

Is there an opportunity for interaction between volunteer and people being served? Breaking down the walls of favoritism is an important value at Mariners. "When someone is in greater need than you are, it changes your perspective. God intersects people and gives perspective...and it changes us. It is not 'we' and 'they' any longer, but 'us,'" says Tim. The adoption ministry certainly provided an opportunity for interaction.

Notice that none of the questions above have to do with funding the new venture. A percentage of the Mariners' Lighthouse budget is set aside annually for development but Tim says, "We never let finances stop us from doing what God is doing. We believe that where people's hearts go, their money goes." So Lighthouse does a lot to aim people's hearts, believing that the money will follow. "We never lead

with money," he adds.

The Adoption Ministry was one of several new ministries officially launched during Mariners' Lighthouse Weekend in the spring of 2006. On Lighthouse Weekend, the entire church focuses on serving the poor in the community. The preaching, worship and special music target the heart of service. A one-time special offering is taken for all Lighthouse Ministries and the service runs a little shorter than usual, allowing people time to visit the booths set up on the patio and lawn. There, volunteers and staff share with potential new recruits their heart and passion for the community service ministries they lead. According to Tim, once a ministry makes it into the Lighthouse Weekend, they feel officially and publicly launched.

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Lighthouse Weekend at Mariners

The Scaffolding Approach

Mariners takes a scaffolding approach to equipping new ministry leaders. They invest a greater amount of regular staff support initially and gradually reduce that support until a new ministry can operate independently. As at Calvary Community Church, new ministry leaders work under the guidance of an established staff person. According to the Lighthouse Manual, new ministries are supported in some of the following ways:

- *Conversation through regular phone calls or in-person meetings*

- *Guidance and participation from staff at initial ministry events*
- *Training and sharing of materials for new volunteers*
- *Notification to all staff of the new ministry and its goals*
- *Funding from an area of Lighthouse budget specifically designated for new ministries*
- *Communication resources such as a church-based phone mailbox, email address computer access, publicity materials and access to Lighthouse database*

But simply helping to launch a ministry isn't enough. Sustaining the innovative idea is another key factor. At monthly meetings with all the volunteer-led ministries, Tim says that the agenda includes celebration, support and input for the future.

One Thirty-Nine Is Born

The following illustration from the Mariners Lighthouse Ministry serves as an example of how a new ministry is born and equipped for success. This story was recorded in the Lighthouse Manual as follows.

In the spring of 2002, Lighthouse pastor Laurie Beshore was updating the congregation on current service opportunities. During her talk, she found herself saying that Lighthouse was involved in ministry with pregnant teens. She explained that as the words left her mouth she thought, "Where did that come from? We don't have a ministry to pregnant teens!" Although Lighthouse had been involved with crisis pregnancy ministries in the past, the perfect match between ministry and program had not been found.

Following the Sunday morning services, a member of the congregation came bounding up to Laurie and said, "I want to be involved in the ministry to pregnant teens. God has put a calling in my heart for this kind of ministry and I have just been looking for ways to get involved."

Following several meetings between this potential volunteer champion and key staff members, all were in agreement that this was clearly a direction God wanted Lighthouse to pursue. The ministry was launched.

The volunteer champion formed a leadership team, naming the ministry One Thirty-Nine after Psalm 139:15 "You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb." Under the guidance of the executive pastor, this team developed relationships with local Christian providers of services to women in crisis pregnancies. Brochures were printed and the new ministry was highlighted in the Lighthouse newsletter.

The volunteer leader-ship team met with staff members to develop a plan for ministry that was consistent with Lighthouse values. A tentative budget was approved. Volunteer orientations and workshops were developed in partnership with other ministries.



One Thirty-Nine, a ministry for women facing unplanned pregnancies, has become one of Mariners' most successful new ministries.

Finally, at the 2003 Lighthouse Weekend services, the volunteer champion was given some time to tell the congregation her story and how God captured her heart for this population. She did not share a plea for more volunteers; rather, she shared what God was doing in her life and through her life and the lives of the other volunteers on the team. The response from the congregation to her story was astonishing.

Currently, there are 100 active volunteers in this ministry. Volunteers serve at three crisis pregnancy centers and four homes for women facing unplanned pregnancy. Some of the volunteer activities are done under the direct guidance of the partner agencies. Other activities, including a bi-monthly Bible study,

parent education and fellowship group for teen moms, are under the sole direction of the One Thirty-Nine team. This ministry has become one of our most successful new ministry ventures.

Launching Your Own Nonprofit

Kathy Greer, Director of Community Service at **Creekside Community Church**, in San Leandro, CA (www.creeksidecommunity.org) sees her job as one of cheerleader and mentor to existing and new outreach ministries. When a person comes to her with an idea for a new ministry it is usually an opportunity for the church to partner with a local existing nonprofit. "The nonprofit partnership organization is sometimes Christian or non-Christian, but is always an organization doing good works for the underserved," says Kathy.

While most of the Creekside outreach ministries have primarily focused on giving time to partnerships, in the spring of 2006, they formed their own nonprofit, Creekside Community Services, Inc. Through their nonprofit they hope to assist their partner organizations that have limited time for grant-writing, as well as accomplish some much needed services to the community that are not yet being done. This nonprofit is under the umbrella of the church. "In order to receive grants and accomplish long-term goals, we felt that this nonprofit status gave us more latitude and freedom," says Kathy.



KATHY GREER

This newly formed nonprofit has a nine-member board (mostly volunteers) and a heart to do big things for God in San Leandro, CA. The first project of Creekside Community Services, Inc. was to take 15 kids from one of the inner city schools they work with to a Santa Cruz Mountain camp. "Most of these children have never been out of the city, let alone experienced a camp setting or even had the opportunity to partake in swimming lessons," says Kathy. So the senior pastor John Bruce and his daughter Jenny Bruce taught several of the students how to swim before camp. Money was used to pay for pool use at the Boys and Girls Clubs in San Leandro and to purchase goggles. They also used some of the money to buy the students sleeping bags, pillows, flashlights, etc., for camp.

Filing paperwork for nonprofit status is no easy task. "We were really blessed to have a lawyer in the church who said he had never done anything like this [starting a nonprofit] but wanted to learn. Believe it or not, we bought the book *Nonprofits for Dummies*," laughs Kathy. Their persistence paid off. Through a lot of emails, this team completed the application. "We were told it would be a several month process." Within two months they received their federal nonprofit (501c3) status. "We didn't have any money and we were very straightforward with what we wanted to accomplish," says Kathy who thinks this is the reason the application went through so quickly. Kathy also credits their lawyer, Shawn Hall, for doing most of the ground work. "He met with our pastor John Bruce and me for moral support, but in actuality all we did was to fill in a few blanks on the paperwork. Shawn really persevered and got the job done." Creekside Community Services, Inc. also received state nonprofit status shortly thereafter.

When the time came to fund this new venture, like Mariners, a one-time special offering was taken. "We have an offering box by the door, and on Easter weekend everything that went in the offering box went to Creekside Community Services, Inc. It was a very generous amount," says Kathy. Receiving that special offering meant Creekside's yearly financial needs would be met in 51 weeks instead of 52. But Kathy says that it surprisingly didn't affect the



Daily time at the pool gave the children great confidence in swimming skills — pictured is Dajaunae.



The zip line was a new experience as well — Talmadge shows off his new skills.



Students from Cox Elementary, along with Kathy (center, back row) and counselors, greatly enjoyed their time at camp.

general fund budget. “The very next week giving was almost double the regular amount, so the Lord indeed filled in the gap,” says Kathy.

Exit Strategies

Sometimes even the best ministries need evaluating to make room for new ideas. What happens when a good plan has run its course? How do you help a volunteer exit a ministry that is unproductive or not as productive as it once was? According to the Lighthouse Manual from Mariners, “With any growth, there are times when pruning is needed. Lighthouse has had its seasons when ministries or staff positions needed to be phased out. We know that although this process of pruning is sometimes painful, it is necessary for us to be able to become the ministry God wants us to be.” When it is time for “pruning” Lighthouse leaders begin by asking the following key questions:

1. *Is this still the most effective way to accomplish our mission?*
2. *Is this the best way to use our resources?*
3. *How meaningful are the volunteer opportunities?*

They also examine each ministry using point values that they have assigned to several elements key to their mission. Some of the areas considered are volunteer involvement, volunteer development and opportunities for life change. From the Lighthouse Manual: “Each ministry is given a point value in each area based on how well it is progressing towards its goals.” Budgetary needs are also evaluated. “We look at cost in two ways. First, the actual budget amount spent on ministry is divided by number of volunteers involved. This gives us a cost per volunteer. Then we divide the cost by number of volunteer hours to give us a cost per volunteer hour.”

Evaluating ministry progress toward reaching common values-based goals and also examining the bottom line cost of ministry allows them to evaluate very different ministries on a consistent scale. Looking at the ministries in terms of costs

and value provides a measure of objectivity for discussion. But, the door is left open for what Mariners calls ‘below the line’ evaluation items:

- *What does your heart and gut say?*
- *Where is God moving?*
- *Is it vital? Does it provide credibility or is it simply part of our image?*
- *Where does it fit in the process of assimilating volunteers? Is it providing a safe first step?*

“The ‘below the line’ items help to keep us from relying too heavily on some contrived measure of success. It encourages us to look not only at tangible results, but at some of the critical intangible results as well,” (from the Lighthouse Manual).

Purposeful Innovation

It’s one thing to encourage and equip those who step up to present an idea, but are churches actively creating a culture of idea-generation and innovation? **Christ Community Church** in Greeley, CO (www.cccgreeley.org) certainly is. Leaders began to realize that their missional focus had been pretty narrow and top-down. With an unsettling feeling about the church’s direction, in January 2005, Senior Pastor Alan Kraft began praying for God to focus the church on Kingdom work, not knowing where this would lead. Out of prayer came a series of passionate messages from Matthew 10 called “The Kingdom Unleashed.” As Alan and his team recalled the events of 2005 into 2006, they realized that this study of the Kingdom of God primed the pump for a larger vision to unfold. “People sometimes aren’t aware of their own dreams until a vision has been presented for them to have,” says Alan.

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The outreach team from Christ Community Church.

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Out of the study on God's Kingdom came the church's own version of the Rick Warren P.E.A.C.E. Plan (www.thepeaceplan.com). This ambitious vision unfolded in the fall of 2005 as a \$4 million stewardship campaign to not only reduce building debt, but also release 395 people to fulfill the following goals:

- Plant Churches
- Equip Leaders
- Assist the Poor
- Community Impact Development
- Educate the Next Generation

The mission of the stewardship journey was to strategically release people and financial resources to impact their community and world as Ephesians 3:20 says, "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." Christ Community Church has an average annual operating budget of \$1.9 million with an average church attendance of 1600. The PEACE Plan campaign was a three-year campaign, above and beyond the regular general fund giving. Half of the \$4 million went to the debt reduction, while the second half went to the initiatives listed above.

As the leaders began filling in some of the details of this huge vision, they came to the realization that they were very staff-centric. They could not complete a vision this large without truly empowering others. "Through the PEACE Plan we have sort of stumbled into empowering others," says Stacey Campbell, executive pastor for the church.



Malawi Children's Center

So, the staff found models and language that purposefully stepped them out of the way so others had a chance to step up. Steve Oeffling, pastor of cross cultural missions took on the PEACE Plan role of equipping leaders, and allowing them to seek God in the deeper level of details associated with meeting the plan goals. Teams brainstorm and pray over specific initiatives and develop the plans. The church has seen 360 people sign up to participate in

particular initiatives to be accomplished. Unlike most church program sign-ups, agreeing to be a part of a team doesn't always mean you are going out to "do" a project. People signed up to "lead" and "create" the ministry that accomplishes the goals.

One team that Steve facilitated was a mission team project. The team brainstormed and prayed about what country to focus on, rather than Steve presenting every detail to the plan. They came up with the African country of Malawi. "I never would have guessed that is where God would lead us," he shares. Steve also says that he can't believe how many people have come up to him and said, "I don't know how to thank you for including me in this." Alan admits that if they had tried to facilitate all parts of the plan themselves, "It would have been a bottleneck if we didn't empower others. And, they are so much more creative than we are!"

For his part of the initiative, Stacey is facilitating the development of new community-based ministries. "In our culture, we were creating a dichotomy between staff and volunteers. We were saying, 'Everybody's a minister' but we were subtly communicating otherwise by not truly empowering people," says Stacey. They set aside \$100,000 and staff time to help remove the barriers that most individuals face when they have an innovative ministry idea, but no money and no one to help them build upon their ideas.



Cambodian Water Project - bringing clean water to Cambodian village people for low cost.



Community Connection Day—members from Christ Community Church working to clean up the community.

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THAT GOD
HAS EQUIPPED
TO CARE FOR
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Staff members have also boldly stood their ground that everyone in the church has a responsibility to engage in leading and participating in Kingdom work. When the December 2004 Tsunami struck, many people in the church said, “Tell me what the church is going to do.” Alan’s response was bold, “You have clear permission to do what God calls you to do,” he said. His response sent a powerful message that every member is a minister that God has equipped to care for his kingdom.

Tina Hagen, Coordinator of Local Outreach for the church says that she has learned a big lesson about her role as a leader. “People needed permission to be the church. We simply gave them permission to act on their passions.”

The Art of Idea Generation

What if passion for ministry exists, problems to solve are evident, but the innovative leaders and solutions seem in short supply? Fueling innovation was the focus of Leadership Network’s 2006 Externally Focused Churches Leadership Community in Big Sur, CA. Innovation expert John Handy was a featured presenter at the event. John was previously a Senior Vice President of Product Design at Mattel Inc., the world’s largest toy company. Each year his team of 160 designers created and produced 1200 toy products including Hot Wheels, Matchbox, Harry Potter and Batman.



John Handy

Innovation was a part of the daily routine for John for 23 years. “Our task was to replace 80% of the toys each year. Only 20% came from last year. Every year we retooled an entire product line for 33 countries and nine languages,” says John. With his great amount of experience in leading top designers to generate innovative ideas, John says that there are five main ingredients that fuel innovation in any organization, whether you are designing toys or the next great breakthrough in church ministry.

Handy’s Five Ingredients to Fuel Innovation

1. Optimism

Teams must include people who “believe anything is possible,” says John, “It takes people to believe ideas are real and that solutions are possible.” Picking a team that is optimistic doesn’t mean picking people who all think alike. Diversity can help fuel innovation. “We have homogenized congregations and we need to invite different people into the group—people we may not like and who think differently than we do. You have to make room for people to share their ideas.” One church leader suggested, “Imagine the energy and ideas that would come up if we invited children, students or young adults to join in brainstorming for new solutions.”

How can leaders manage tension when team members, though optimistic, have differing styles? Well-executed brainstorming sessions are key components to generating the ideas that lead to new ministry innovation. Eric Swanson says, “In a functional team, everyone is able to contribute and ideas are listened to. When ideas are presented in brainstorming, leaders need to say ‘Yes...and’ not ‘yes...but’ to help people with grand ideas.”

According to John, “Your goal [in brainstorming] is to collect as many ideas as possible and capture them.” People often want to evaluate each idea as it comes. John warns, “Ideate fully before you evaluate. Build on other people’s ideas and combine thoughts in unexpected ways. Don’t ask ‘why;’ ask ‘why not?’”

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Brainstorming doesn't have to be a one-time event. "People work in different ways. Some people need to sit and stew," says John. Karl Mueller, minister of outreach at **Word of Grace Church** in Mesa, AZ (www.wordofgrace.org) says some of his most successful idea-generating sessions have come from "brainstorming on a budget" where his team had three meetings over four weeks. It's important to have everyone participate: it creates synergy which is energy multiplied with everyone freely building on each others' ideas.

2. A Call to Adventure

"Calling a task easy doesn't inspire, but a call to adventure does," says John. His advice is to shoot big, "Sometimes we try to minimize the adventure. Don't tell people it's going to be easy—that's not inspiring." Leaders should use the same excitement when calling teams

to innovation as John F. Kennedy did when he called America to the moon in 1961 with this statement: "We should go to the moon not because it is easy but because it is hard."

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Calling teams and individuals to shoot for the moon in ministry isn't about easy wins either. "Big projects are worth doing. Avoid the temptation to

make things easy. Not everyone will sign up but those who do will be sold and will be the ones who create and innovate," says John. Making the call is not for the sake of adventure alone. "Innovation usually comes out of fulfilling a need. To have a new idea, it has to be unique, but it also has to be valuable." New ministry innovation should solve a problem and help fulfill the mission of the church.

3. Competition

Many great innovations have been fueled by the element of competition. In 1969, Neil Armstrong stepped on the moon after the Russians started the competition. In 1903, the

Wright Brothers were inspired to invent the airplane to receive the prize money offered for the first flight. In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell submitted his patent for the phone just 24 hours before a Frenchman submitted his. It is part of human nature to excel. Although church leaders don't often participate in ministry "competition" how can they get the same energy and excitement to fuel innovation in ministry teams?

To inspire the participants of the Externally Focused Churches Leadership Community, John engaged them in a "competitive" experience. Breaking up the 47-member group into smaller groups and giving them a variety of simple building materials, John challenged the group to create a ball launcher. "This is to help you work together as well as have some fun," he told the group. Though creating a ball-launcher was not the solution to a problem, having people work together on a project quickly helped the groups find their distinct roles and characteristics on a team. Each team had individuals who intensely got to work and led the way while others played the role of cheerleaders and project managers.



Working on a creative challenge, team members discover their individual roles.

4. Inspiration

"Part of our responsibility in life is to inspire others," says John. To inspire his teams at Mattel, John designed special spaces for idea generation. "We designed our own space for

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the Hot Wheels guys because environments inspire and can help generate ideas. We decided to build a tree house for our brainstorming sessions. People lock themselves in there and come back with amazing stuff.”

Church leaders might not build tree houses, but they can take teams to inspiring spaces. The great outdoors or field trips can inspire innovation. Mariners Church leaders and volunteers took trips to neighboring Santa

Ana to ask residents, “What is it you want for your community?” Keeping kids in school was a common theme. This research inspired volunteers to action and the Lighthouse Learning Center was born. The Learning Center provides a safe and caring place for people of all ages to learn, grow, pursue their dreams and realize their potential educationally, socially and spiritually.

5. **Passion**

According to John, passion comes when “You love what you do, believe what you do is important, and you have a sense of ownership.” But passion can be lost when leaders are not open to new ideas. Mariners’ Laurie Beshore says that one of her biggest jobs is to keep fires burning. “I have to make sure I don’t throw water on a volunteer’s passionate idea,” she says. When leaders are not open and positive to new ideas, “That is how passion gets snuffed out,” says John. “Great things don’t just happen by luck, you have to fuel them.”

Initiating a new ministry often means presenting the plan for approval. After presenting hundreds of new ideas, John has the following suggestions: “You will always find people sitting on that wall and they will try to talk you out of it.” In designing toys, there were always people in other departments that had to be convinced. There were also those that didn’t want to take risks. “This frustrated me for a long time. I had to shift my thinking to expect this and had to be

prepared for people on the wall. I had to have answers for them, and fast,” says John.

To prepare for people “on the wall,” take the time necessary to present new ideas with excellence and passion. The following is John’s quick list of presentation tips:

- *Plan carefully with the audience in mind*
- *Prepare for wall sitters*
- *Be authentic and enthusiastic*
- *State what the problem is before launching into the solution*
- *Understand that people make decisions using intellect and emotions*
- *Use whatever means possible to make your message impactful*

The Courage to Multiply a Thousand

“When we think about growing our ministries we often think about working just a little bit harder,” says Eric Swanson. “Breakthrough ideas do not come from working just a little bit harder in the same way you always have, but from having goals that are so big that they force a new way to go about the work.”

Moses was faced with a situation where even working harder wasn’t the solution. “He could not do any more than he was doing, but he dared to challenge the people to do a thousand fold more than they were currently doing,” says Eric. Standing on the bank of the Jordan River Moses gathered the multitude of Israelites around him and began to encourage them with words of hope and stories of God’s faithfulness. Moses said:

At that time I said to you, “You are too heavy a burden for me to carry alone. The Lord your God has increased your numbers so that today you are as many as the stars in the sky. May the Lord, the God of your

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fathers, increase you a thousand times and bless you as he has promised! But how can I bear your problems and your burdens and your disputes all by myself? Choose some wise, understanding and respected men from each of your tribes, and I will set them over you." You answered me, "What you propose to do is good." So I took the leading men of your tribes, wise and respected men, and appointed them to have authority over you—as commanders of thousands of hundreds, of fifties and of tens and as tribal officials. And I charged your judges at that time: "Hear the disputes between your brothers and judge fairly, whether the case is between brother Israelites or between one of them and an alien. Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God. Bring me any case too hard for you, and I will hear it." And at that time I told you everything you were to do. (Deuteronomy 1:9-18).

"That is the prayer of a leader!" says Eric. Though Moses knew that there was more work than he could handle, he still asked God to multiply the work. "As burned-out as he was he still wanted God to do a thousand times more," he continues.

What would bring about such dedicated leadership? Exodus 2:11-15 records Moses witnessing the beating of an Israelite slave in Egypt. Moses' reaction to this injustice was so strong that he killed the Egyptian guard and then ran away. During the burning bush moment in the desert years later (Exodus 3), God reminded Moses of the Israelites' oppression. God not only ignited the bush, he refueled Moses' passion for his people. "God's heart and Moses' heart were aligned perfectly around the intense frustration and the oppression of the Israelites," says Bill Hybels, senior pastor at **Willow Creek Community Church**, South Barrington, IL (www.willowcreek.org). Bill describes this as a state of "holy discontent" that every believer has

within him or her. "What moves sane, well-adjusted people from the comforts of the couch to the demands and hardships associated with engagement in our world's problems? What force is powerful enough to do that in someone's life? Holy discontent. That's the key to understanding what moves people to engagement," says Bill.¹

Dysfunctional organizations are those where one person is doing the lion's share of the work and coming up with all the ideas while the others enjoy the ride. "Healthy organizations have shared ownership and assume that even the least qualified person in the organization can make the best contribution as long as they are aligned with the mission," says Eric. Though Moses questioned his credentials to lead, God faithfully equipped and empowered him. (Exodus 3:11).

Releasing Innovators

Remember Harry and Mary? Over coffee they describe their heart for the unwed mothers they have met through their volunteer work at the local pregnancy center. Mary reveals to you, "Every time I see those teen mothers, I think of my own mother and her struggle to raise me when she was only 17 and Grandpa kicked us out of the house." In tears, Mary stops and Harry continues, "We see that after they have their babies, they have a hard time getting on their feet financially because they have no childcare. We think there is a solution and we'd like to get your thoughts..."

As a leader, your head is saying, "There's no funding, no room at the church and I'll have to talk to the board." But you aren't anxious or fearful of the new idea because your heart knows they are *God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do this good work, which God prepared in advance for them to do.*

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Interested in reading more on the topic of innovation?

Here's what other externally focused churches are reading:

The Medici Effect: Breakthrough Insights at the Intersection of Ideas, Concepts, and Cultures, by Frans Johansson, Harvard Business School Press (September 2004)

The Art of Innovation: Lessons in Creativity from IDEO, America's Leading Design Firm, by Tom Kelley, Jonathan Littman, Currency (January 16, 2001)

Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company That Changed the World, by Chris Lowney, Loyola Press; Reprint edition (January 2005)

The Seeds of Innovation: Cultivating the Synergy That Fosters New Ideas, by Elaine Dundon, American Management Association; 1st edition (June 15, 2002)

ENDNOTES

¹ Hybels, Bill. "Holy Discontent" © 2006 Willow Creek Community Church. Sermon transcript available at <http://www.willowcreek.com/productsb.asp?invtid=PR28237> last accessed Aug. 8, 2006.



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