

The Rector's Reflections

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OUTWARD, Part V

As I stated last month, cells working to create just laws and combat the struggles of the disenfranchised, are validly proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to pre-Christians (Matthew 5:13-16). Another aspect pertaining to the Outward value is the creation of cells which place emphasis on ministering to a specific need or segment of the community. For instance, because of the numerous issues in Postmodern culture related to addiction, cells can be purposely formed which uphold the four dimensions of being holistic, yet integrate the twelve-step recovery and support process. In Christian bodies which take seriously the call to be apostolic, "Continu[ing] in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles and . . . sent to carry out Christ's mission to all people" (BCP, 854), recovery ministries abound. George Hunter explains:

All of the apostolic congregations I have studied are heavily invested in recovery ministries; especially in recent years. Although 12 Step recovery ministries are a new emphasis of apostolic congregations, these ministries are consistent with the apostolic congregation's perennial emphasis upon ministry to pre-Christian people.

While apostolic congregations vary somewhat in their theological interpretation of addiction, the following themes would represent a consensus. Addiction is a deep and complex psychological and spiritual affliction. Addiction is the typical form that possessive destructive Evil has taken in our culture in this generation. People's lives get "out of control" around specific addictions or compulsions; their feelings and energy become frozen; they experience emptiness, pain, and a kind of "insanity"; their lives and families become "dysfunctional"; they

become alienated from other people and from God. The addiction is "bigger" than the addict, so the addicts are powerless to free themselves—though addicts deny the fact (or the seriousness) of their addictions, and indulge in the illusion that they are in control. Usually, people are liberated from addiction and its effects only through the power of God as mediated through social accountability and support; the 12 Steps represent the pattern in which God's action through the social process typically works. . . . In most communities the needs and opportunities for starting recovery and support groups are vast, and no institution except the church is positioned to provide the recovery ministries that millions of people need (George G. Hunter, III, *Church for the Unchurched*, 103-104, 110).

Moreover, cells can have their regular weekly communal holistic experience. At another designated time, cells can have a grouping whereby members intentionally bring pre-Christians in their F.R.A.N. Network who have a specific need. These individuals will receive ministry appropriate to their situation. Larry Stockstill says this regarding the conversion growth of his parish, as they've deployed this missionary approach effectively:

Admittedly, until I heard about the evangelistic emphasis of the cells in El Salvador, I had no interest in cells. On a trip to Mexico, I was told of a large church in San Salvador that held two meetings per week: one for "edification" (planning and edifying), usually held on a

Tuesday night, and one for “evangelism” held on Saturday night. Members were all asked on Tuesday to name the unsaved people they would bring on Saturday. Then on Saturday night, the message and method of the meeting catered to the lost, and relationships were formed that either resulted in an immediate conversion or a *bridge-building* relationship. The following Tuesday, that past Saturday’s “evangelism” meeting was evaluated and new plans were made for the following Saturday. Roles were assigned for prayer, worship, hospitality and other needed functions.

I caught the vision, believing that in America the same strategy would be effective. However, I felt that instead of twice weekly, a once-a-week meeting could vary its format in the same way, planning and evangelizing on alternate weeks. For the past four years, our cells at Bethany have met in this way. The first week’s “planning and edification” gathering centers around meeting the needs of believers, doing spiritual warfare, releasing spiritual gifts and teaching on spiritual maturity. The following week’s lesson centers on a “felt need” topic (divorce, loneliness, depression, parenting, etc.), and the cell members invite their unsaved friends who may fall into that category.

This alternating strategy has worked well for Bethany, with almost 5,000 conversions in that four-year period. Frustrations in follow-up, assimilation and preserving the fruit have driven us to develop our present structure of leadership and discipleship training.

Each cell group sets up a three-by-four “white board” in a chair at the edification meeting. The names of the targeted “three most likely” candidates for salvation are listed on the board. The group then spends time praying over those names and doing spiritual warfare for the following week’s evangelism meeting. The chart keeps the group continually focused on unsaved souls. When someone who is listed on the chart becomes a believer, that person’s name is

removed and another is added (Larry Stockstill, *The Cell Church*, 50-51).

Lastly, a few final points regarding the Outward value need to be mentioned. First, the Outward dimension significantly influences the general health of holistic cells and even the overall parish. “Every small group or church needs to have some form of evangelism going on in order to maintain health” (Steve Sjogren, *101 Ways to Reach Your Community*, 12). Peter Drucker puts it in these terms, “Any enterprise begins to die when it’s run for the benefit of the insider rather than for the benefit of outsiders” (Peter Drucker, quoted in Loughlan Sofield, Rosine Hammell and Carroll Juliano, *Building Community*, 103). On the other hand, the Outward value is often difficult to maintain in cell life. Billy Joe Daugherty explains:

We do the same five things in cells that we embrace as the vision of Victory, Worship, prayer, the Word, fellowship and evangelism are all emphasized in the cells. Evangelism is the one that needs the most emphasis. It is natural for Christians to enjoy doing the first four, but it takes effort to reach out to the unsaved (Billy Joe Daugherty, “Victory Christian Center and Victory Fellowship of Ministries” in *The New Apostolic Churches*, ed. by C. Peter Wagner, 168).

How can cells counteract this tendency? A cell leadership team can “enlist someone in the group to be an ‘Outward Champion.’ This person should have a passion for relating to unbelieving people and show great interest in this topic” (Jim Egli, *Reaching Outward: Helping Your Group Members Bring Christ into Everyday Relationships*, 25). Further, the Outward Champion (sometimes called captain) keeps the vision of reaching pre-Christians before group members, and assists the group in practically living the call to servant evangelism in this pre-Christian society. We now turn our focus to the Forward value of holistic cells.

Faithfully in Jesus Christ,

Greg J