

# ***Re-Ignite!***

## **A Network Gathering for Adult Ministry Leaders**

### **REPORT**

#### **Summary:**

The *Re-Ignite* Network Gathering was held April 7-9, 2011 in Orlando, Florida. The twenty-two participants attended are all currently engaged in ministry with adults, particularly those in midlife and beyond. Participants came from across the country including California, Washington, Illinois, Minnesota, Tennessee, Virginia, Maryland, Ohio and Florida. The format of the Gathering combined inspirational talks, lecture-style presentations, panel discussion, and lively conversation. Evaluation and feedback reflected a high level of satisfaction and appreciation for concepts learned and practical application shared.

#### **Teaching:**

The Re-Ignite Gathering commenced with a time of worship led by Donna Fagerstrom and an inspirational talk given by Pastor John K. Jenkins, Sr., Vice President of National Ministries, Converge Worldwide. Based on II Timothy 1:6, Pastor Jenkins encouraged us to inspire older adults to live out the “good deposit that was entrusted to you.” Believing that it is in the second half of life that experience, faith and love come together, it is imperative that we have strong and vibrant ministries in our churches.

Friday morning’s sessions were taught by Amy Hanson, PhD. Amy is a gerontologist, author and an advocate for developing effective ministries with and for Boomers. [www.amyhanson.org](http://www.amyhanson.org) Her first session entitled “High Impact: Engaging Boomers and Beyond in Ministry” addressed the needs found among people in three age categories: the Frail elders age 85+; Seniors age 70-84; and the New Old – ages 55-69. Amy and participants then identified several ministries that would meet those needs.

#### **Needs of 85+:**

- To not be ignored nor forgotten
- Social involvement
- Isolation
- Physical health
- Daily needs including shopping, household maintenance
- Need to be valued
- Spiritual needs

#### **Ways to meet those needs of age 85+**

- Visitation
- Provide transportation
- Be a liaison or advocate
- Provide spiritual growth opportunities

#### Challenges in meeting needs of those 85+

- They can be negative
- Limited communication ability
- It is time intensive
- Need to earn their trust

#### Needs of those age 70-85

- Denial
- Health issues/crisis/decline
- Lots of loss – compounded
- Financial issues
- Relationships in family changes

#### Ways to meet the needs of age 70-85

- Be intergenerational

#### Challenges in meeting needs of this age group:

- Traditionally focused on fellowship – are out of balance
- People want a ministry “for us.”

Amy reminded us that the definitions of aging could be:

1. Chronological – based on number of years lived or “age”
2. Functional – how we function/what our abilities are
3. Social – how society defines us.

The morning’s discussion included ways to develop intergenerational relationships through intentional ministry activity. Ideas such as creating natural ways for the generations to serve together, education and creating meaningful worship experiences. We also discussed the importance of both evangelism and spiritual growth within the ministries of midlife and older adults.

The second session of the morning focused on “Service: The Linchpin for Engaging Boomers in Ministry.” Amy’s “perfect” equation: Time + Experience + Resources = Significant Kingdom Impact. She discussed the phases of retirement and importance of re-thinking service opportunities for each age group and helping them find their place to serve.

All participants were encouraged to share their reactions to the material presented. Comments included:

- My head is swirling. Need to think of a new way to do “church” and older adult ministry. Not come at it from program but how to equip people.
- Find it fascinating to think of ways to connect older people to God

- We need a complete overhaul.
- Need to be purposeful.
- Wonder how to engage senior pastors in this ministry
- Thankful for good suggestions and ideas on how revitalize ministries
- I'm here to soak it in.
- Need to re-position our ministry
- Our experience gives us passion for ministry
- How do we keep the flame going?
- Need to be pro-active!
- Need to focus on Boomers
- Need to help people find a heart connection with the Lord.

Conclusion of morning sessions: Full of content, ideas, information – and challenge to change the old way of doing things and re-envision a new future of ministry.

The final teaching session on Saturday morning was led by Jerry and Dee Sheveland, President and First Lady, Converge Worldwide. Based on the gospel story of Mary who lavishly poured an expensive perfume upon the feet of Jesus, Jerry and Dee challenged us to be extravagant and contagious leaders who pour out our lives to serve Jesus.

### **Interaction:**

The afternoon session featured a Panel of Ministry Leaders who work with organizations that provide opportunities for Boomers to grow and serve:

1. Jay McSwain, Founder and President of PLACE Ministries  
[www.placeministries.org](http://www.placeministries.org)
  - a. This organization has developed a process for helping individuals identify their gifts and passions and find places to serve that fits their personal profile.
  - b. PLACE has developed curriculum and training to help church leaders do this.
  - c. Bergstroms are using this material at Northshore and would like to see it multiplied throughout our churches and regions – particularly adapted to people in the second half of life.
2. Gene Selander, International Director, A2:5, Converge Worldwide.  
<http://www.convergeworldwide.org/a25>
  - a. Looking for pastors, leaders, skilled lay persons – to be a part of a core team that plants an English-speaking church in identified areas in Europe and Panama.
  - b. Need people to serve from 2 weeks to 2 years in church planting

3. Dan Lee, Global Media Outreach, Campus Crusade  
<http://www.globalmediaoutreach.com/>
  - a. God is doing amazing things in reaching people through technology – especially the internet
  - b. Online missionaries are needed to follow up the 42,000 people per day who indicate they have made a spiritual decision
  - c. Wonderful opportunities for people age 50+ to share faith
  - d. Need basic computer knowledge; will be interviewed, given 4-week training course, and then instruction on answering the people who are writing in
  - e. Do not have to go overseas – just to one’s computer to be involved in international outreach
4. Brian Stankich, Converge International Ministries  
<http://www.convergeworldwide.org/reach-nations>
  - a. “Touch a Life of a Missionary” – wants to see people matched with new missionary appointees and walk with them for 6 mos-2 years while they prepare to go to the field. Or help them re-enter when they come home.
  - b. Be an advocate for missionaries – find something you can do to encourage them and help them serve.
  - c. We need people to develop a care system to support and encourage international missionaries
  - d. Care Partner program through 2<sup>nd</sup> ½ - match people with missionary appointees and those who are returning to be prayer partners, provide practical assistance and coaching
5. Bruce Smith, President, Wycliffe Associates  
<http://www.wycliffeassociates.org/>
  - a. Wycliffe’s goal is to get God’s Word out around the world
  - b. Wycliffe Associates invites Christian professionals to use their skills to advance Bible language translation
  - c. Other skills are needed to do work other than translation – that frees up the translators to do their job.
  - d. The goal is to utilize professionals – especially retired professionals – with whatever time they have to commit.

The afternoon was lively and full of questions and excitement as we discussed ways to help midlife and older people serve with renewed passion and purpose – and to see the Kingdom of God impacted!

### **Action:**

At the beginning of the Network Gathering we compiled a list of issues that were on our minds that we wanted to discuss. Participants multi-voted and then prioritized the following top concerns for discussion on Saturday morning. Here are some of

the questions/concerns discussed. (The entire list is found at the conclusion of this section.

1. At the church level we seem to be re-active. How do we turn to become PRO-Active?
  - a. How do we change the culture?
  - b. How can we develop ministry that is not so “age” related but more “stage” related?
  - c. How can we overcome being program focused rather than people focused?
  - d. We need to step back and look at the big needs and then think of programming solutions
  - e. Is there really a one size that fits all?
  - f. We need a NEW vision
  - g. Dream Team – bring together the people that will develop their own ministry
2. How do we pass the baton of leadership to the next generation (without destroying the place)?
  - a. Worship – seems to be a dividing point; how do we provide alternatives that help people worship in different modalities?
  - b. At Ignite Conference – the question was posed: “Whom do you do Sunday morning for?” This will guide everything you do as a church.
3. How do we challenge people to swim against the American Dream/societal expectations of retirement?
  - a. Christ came to bring abundant life – we need to teach, train, model
  - b. Hear personal stories.
  - c. Anecdote: Generosity
4. How do we reach the most unchurched generation for Christ?
  - a. Be a bridge
  - b. Go where they are – golf course, motorcycling, share life experiences
  - c. Make evangelism a priority
5. How do we balance between service, spiritual growth and evangelism?
  - a. Develop a Dream Team that constructs the ministry
  - b. Don’t go overboard on any one aspect.

Other issues identified but were not discussed in this session:

1. Are the old categories still valid? Or do we need to re-think the whole paradigm of “second half” ministries?
2. How can we share resources with the community? Not just money, but buildings, space
3. How do we engage senior pastors/ senior leadership in the dialogue about older adult ministries?
4. How do we staff for this ministry? Vying for dollars, resources.
5. How do we encourage church planters to see the demographics of midlife and older adults – and see who God has given them?

6. How do we train staff for this life stage?
7. Can we define the issues (i.e. youth ministry identifies issues common to address.) that are faced in this life stage?
  - a. Finances
  - b. Passing baton of faith to children, grandchildren, next generation
  - c. Sandwich generation – aging parents; adult children
  - d. How to have good relationships with adult children
  - e. Mature marriages
8. How do we get the “younger” elders to get involved?
9. How do you split up 50-70's when the 70+ want to draw them in?
10. How can we match up gifts with service?
11. How do we fund our ministry?
12. How can we develop an intergenerational focus?
13. How do we change the vocabulary? Same language?
14. How do we resolve cultural differences?
15. What is CASA? (Note: visit [www.goCASA.org](http://www.goCASA.org) for more information. The upcoming International Leadership Conference in Anaheim, November 9-11, 2011 is an excellent opportunity to learn more about midlife and older adult ministry!)

Enough questions to warrant another Gathering!!

The *Re-Ignite* Gathering ended with presents, prayer and evaluations.

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