

A PRESENTATION

On

CHURCHES

At work on

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL, SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND HEALTHY CHURCH
WITH AN URGENT, CHRIST-CENTERED MISSION

Springs of Living Water!

**Healthy Churches with an Urgent,
Christ-centered mission**

By David S. Young

I. Spiritual Renewal, Servant Leadership, and Healthy Church

Springs of Living Water! is an exciting model for church renewal. Using a deep spiritual orientation, each church enters a renewal process to discover its unique path for new life. With the spiritual as primary, transformation is seen as including spiritual formation, servant leadership and being a healthy church.

Spiritually focused:

Each church embarks on a deeper spiritual journey. A renewal team is called from within the church and assists the church throughout the process. With the pastor, they commit to take their new next incremental step in the spiritual disciplines. In turn, the team invites the entire congregation into the disciplines. Teaching and preaching on the disciplines facilitates this effort.

Along with the disciplines, the spiritual focus permeates the process through using spiritual discernment in making decisions. In meetings, leaders use the style of worshipful work where they seek to follow God's leading and listen to the sense of the meeting. The spiritual thrust provides the key ingredient of energy in the upswing of new momentum for the church.

Servant Leader led:

Leadership style is critical for renewal. Spiritually attuned, in servant leadership, persons respond by serving God and in so serving, serve others. The Scriptures and the best of current servant leadership materials teach that the servant becomes the leader. Servant leadership is taught, practiced and utilized throughout the vitalization process. Listening, empathizing, and using persuasion rather than power begins this path.

Cutting edge features of servant leadership are used to provide a solid base for the renewal process. The gift of dialogue is a process for communication. Dialogue shapes teamwork and maximizes the perspectives of each person. Foresight, "the lead of the leader", is used to move from a vision to a concrete, flexible plan of renewal. This topic is the title of the chapter in the anthology of the Greenleaf Center, *Focus on Leadership, Servant Leadership for the 21st Century*.

Healthy Church:

The third emphasis is on being a healthy church. Unique to this model is that we approach the congregation from a position of looking for its strengths and from that perspective look how to approach its needs. Self study is done to discover new energy and the identity of a church. One year is spent discerning a Biblical vision after which a three-year plan of renewal is discerned and implemented.

II. Approach

Springs of Living Water! is a model in which individual churches or clusters of churches go through the church renewal process. Rather than a solo endeavor, pastors work with a renewal team. Churches are eager to learn a process and see their churches renewed. The work is all implemented in the local church. The Springs of Living Water! notebook details each aspect of the Springs! initiative and assists local churches and districts to know how to establish a renewal effort.

One model is to have a local congregation go through the process of their own. In this model, someone conducts sessions with the local renewal team ensuring that there is training in each area of the renewal process. The renewal team launches the corporate spiritual disciplines folder, plans each congregational event and keeps in communication with leadership groups in the church.

The other model is for a cluster of congregations to go through the process together. In this way, churches help one another, see the strength of each another, and support one another in the renewal process. This model is embedded in districts as home missions. A leadership team can be called to establish the initiative, coordinate the effort, discern and call the churches, call cluster coordinators, and coordinate training events.

In this case training is done at gatherings of the renewal teams of each church. This training moves through the process and has churches bear testimony to one another of what is happening in their local church. The training includes resources and a sheet “homeward bound” that tells the teams exactly what they need to do as they return to their local church. The cluster coordinator is a vital assistant keeping everyone in touch.

While each model has its own value, the work of a cluster can help sustain the momentum and have churches assist one another in the process. In both cases support of the endeavor is done through a prayer team and by churches in renewal praying for one another. Churches put a high value on the process upon which they have embarked and work to sustain that momentum in every way possible.

III. Background

The forerunner of *Springs!* began in 1970 while pastoring a church in need of renewal. The need led to entering a Doctor of Ministry program in church renewal from 1973-76 where the pastor and church worked in mutual goals. Beginning with the outcomes in that church, *Springs of Living Water!*, has identified that going deeper spiritually as the underlying need in church renewal. Jesus provides the living water for new life for individuals and congregations. The spiritual is integrated in all we do in to help congregations enter and continue on a spiritual journey. The spiritual thrust leads to servant leadership and church renewal. The output is guided by the input.

Teaching this approach in church renewal began at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1986. With intensives in church renewal doubling in size, the president of the seminary suggested that the original course be put in manuscript form through a mentoring program at Princeton Theological Seminary. Richard Stoll Armstrong guided the writing of *A New Heart and A New Spirit, A Plan for Renewing Your Church* (Judson Press, 1994) which include the illustrations of three churches that were renewed.

Then an interdenominational conference co-sponsored by the Robert Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership was held at the Daylesford Abbey. The three pastors featured in *A New Heart and A New Spirit* told their stories. A lunch with “renewal stew” had to be held because of the enthusiasm of these pastors and the reception by attendees. Breakout sessions rounded out the successful conference.

The first attempt in having clusters of churches use the process began in 1995. Pastors of four officially designated dying churches and their Regional Executive met monthly for sessions. Two churches turned around; two suffered from inadequate leadership. The Regional Executive used the process for a ten-year region wide renewal emphasis leading to a unified Baptist Conference recorded in the Philadelphia Inquirer.

Teaching intensives in spiritual formation, servant leadership and church renewal continued in the 1990's. The subsequent book, *Servant Leadership for Church Renewal, Shepherds by the Living Springs*, (Herald Press, 1999) integrates spiritual formation and servant leadership. By 1999, the American Baptist Churches engaged this servant to envision and design a ten-year thrust in church renewal.

Under the title of *Rekindle!*, regions formed clusters of churches across the country. The cores of renewal teams from each church came to a regional fiber optic site connected with the originating site. Churches went through a four-year renewal process. Seven clusters of churches from coast to coast began in the class of 2001. Six additional clusters began in the class of 2002. Approximately 50 churches joined the process nationwide. Trained local coordinators in the regions assisted the clusters of churches.

IV. Strengths

Strengths of the model of *Springs of Living Water* are numerous. The process has been field-tested and grows with every application. The spiritual journey through use of disciplines totally encompasses each step of the endeavor. Spiritual discernment is taught and used in making decisions. The process involves the entire church. Developing teamwork is a plus. Churches help one another in a cluster.

The lives of individuals are changed; executives change; regions change; denominations change. The spiritual movement of God is felt. Tremendous gratitude abounds. There is the joy of renewed faith matched with servant ministries.

Outcomes (while in the process)

After beginning of process:

“It is great to see a renewed sense of uniqueness and identity in these people”

Rev. Margie McCarty, First Baptist Church of Abington, Waverly, PA

After a cluster session:

“Great session on Saturday! The folks in my cluster left encouraged and with a sense of direction.”

--Wayne Diffenderfer, Area Minister and Cluster Coordinator.

After a church was into renewal:

While challenged that a church building was not happening, the pastor noted after people began practicing the disciplines themselves, regained focus and enjoyed being together. The church needing built was first from within.

--Charlotte White, pastor New Zion AME Church, southern Delaware.

See *Springs of Living Water, Christ-Centered Church Renewal*, pg. 29, 30.

Outcomes (longer term)

After four years

The stories of three churches, diverse in leadership, location and ethnicity are told in A New Heart and A New Spirit. Each began the spiritual journey, went through the process and shaped a renewal plan. Each developed ministries tailored for their church and community. Attendance increased significantly. Persons began using their gifts for ministry. A positive spirit pervaded. Churches became healthy congregations with an urgent Christ centered mission.

Long term outcomes: The new book *Springs of Living Water, Christ-Centered Church Renewal* has exciting outcomes in each area of the renewal process. Those stories continue to be told in the initiatives underway.

V. Expanding the Mission

The question arises of widening the scope and seeking new partners in *Springs of Living Water!* We seek God's leading as this endeavor expands.

Clusters can be shaped either locally or in regions or by using technology, across the nation. Judicatories and regions can be partners.

Seminaries with a deep commitment to spiritual formation, servant leadership and the renewal in the local church can find this an exciting part of fulfilling mission.

A closing thought

“The lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water.” Rev. 7:17

This scripture and others like it invite us to the new life in the Gospel where we experience spiritual formation tied to servant leadership and church renewal.

At no time has there been such eagerness and such readiness for the church to experience a renewed and robust life in Christ Jesus.

This presentation is an invitation for partners to join and experience the dynamic new life that has been found in a growing number of churches.

Undergirding: *Springs of Living Water* is undergirded by prayer and by the wisdom of good counsel. A team of people is being called on to provide prayer support is active and an advisory team offers counsel. We welcome your participation.

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