

CHAPTER 8

THE EQUIPPING AND MOBILIZATION STRATEGY

It is essential to make, mature, and multiply disciples within the FLC body of Christ, but this is incomplete if it does not produce apostolic disciples sent into the community and world. The thesis of this paper is that biblically and theologically sound strategies can be employed to mature, equip, and mobilize Christians for apostolic discipleship. The body of Christ serves as the incarnated hands and feet of Christ, and FLC prays that the gospel is displayed through nurturing relationships, rest, relief, release, and redirection (refocus). The recruitment of volunteers is insufficient because FLC seeks to fulfill people in lay ministry, not simply fill ministry openings. To accomplish these goals, a clear equipping and mobilization strategy was crafted.

The first element of this strategy was a sermon and study series focused on the mobilization of lay ministers in small groups dispersed in homes, restaurants, and workplaces. The second dimension involves reaching generations and disenfranchised groups by targeting their particular needs. The goals share the gospel of Jesus Christ compassionately, connect people to Christ personally, and connect people through edifying Christian relationships. The third dimension is a wider outreach through a collaboration of churches that serves the city.

Strategy for Mobilizing Ministers Internally

At first glance, equipping ministry sounds very simple: essentially building an internal culture that values gift-based service, then creating ways to help people move from where they are now to where they should be. But the problem centers on where we start. Most people walk into your church with a consumer mind-set. We live in a consumer culture where we are used to going to mega-stores, Web sites, and highly specialized vendors who provide us with many choices and services so we can get exactly what we want. Many choose a church by looking for one that gives them the best “religious goods and services,” since they are a consumer of “religious goods and services.” It is hard to move people from a consumer mind-set to a servant lifestyle when so much in their world militates against this transition. Yet, it is exactly this transformation that will provide them with the greatest joy and maturity. To build an equipping culture in a sea of opposing forces requires bold prayer, careful strategy, and persistent, never-ending work.¹

Pareto’s principle suggests that twenty percent of total church membership accomplishes eighty percent of church program and activity.² Since FLC averages 850 at worship on a weekend and 2800 members, between 175 and 560 people contribute significantly in intentional ministry capacity. Based on FLC’s core value that everyone is a minister, FLC can concentrate on training and equipping this sizeable number of active persons. This deliberate strategy can produce dramatic and even exponential growth in the mobilization of lay ministers into mission. An initial, previously conducted sermon series and accompanying small group studies laid the foundation for a church-wide effort. FLC will communicate the high expectation that each worshipper and member is encouraged and expected to participate. FLC’s strategy combines the short-term intensive study called

¹ Sue Mallory and Brad Smith, *The Equipping Church Guidebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 15.

² Arthur W. Häfner, “Pareto’s Principle: The 80-20 Rule,” *Supply Chain Planet*, February 2004 [journal on-line]; available from http://www.supplychainplanet.com/e_article000229669.cfm; Internet; accessed October 5, 2005.

*Living Beyond Myself*³ provided by Willow Creek Resources and Sue Mallory's detailed and long-term strategy and process for equipping and mobilizing ministers into apostolic mission.⁴

The *Living Beyond Myself* Series

I am convinced that we need a radical mind-shift in our churches today, from me-focused to other-focused. Can you imagine what would happen if entire congregations embraced Christ's Last Supper directive that we serve one another? A volunteer revolution would break out all over the world! I think it's time. Don't you?⁵

The *Living Beyond Myself* series will serve as a catalyst for conversation and action in FLC small groups as individuals contribute, talents, and treasures in service to Christ and others. FLC's ultimate goal is for all members to identify a service ministry in which to participate with a specific time commitment. The four-week series will create significant change, but momentum will continue through a flexible follow-up plan. It must also respond positively to an influx of new people. An "Equipping Ministry Action Plan Timeline" is included in Appendix 12 that details the sequence of program elements in response to these challenges. The following framework of ACTS summarizes FLC's equipping approach to mobilize ministers.

³ Bill Hybels, *Living Beyond Myself: Discover Joy Through Serving Others* (Barrington, IL: Willow Creek Community Church, 2004).

⁴ Mallory and Smith, *The Equipping Church Handbook*.

⁵ Hybels, *Living Beyond Myself*, preface.

The Acts Framework

Lay ministers will be equipped through the following four element framework: attract, connect, train, and sustain (ACTS). “A” stands for attract people to serve in various ministries. People learn self-worth when they recognize that God loves them and has equipped them to make a difference. Ministry fairs, newsletter highlights of volunteers, personal testimonies, and PowerPoint presentations will offer service opportunities. The most effective approach, however, is summed up in the premise: “All leaders and volunteers must believe that it is their responsibility to ‘tap the shoulders’ of the folks next to them and invite them into ministry.”⁶ Potential ministers have confirmed the notion that a shoulder tap “tells me that someone wants to be with me, that I have worth, that I can make a difference.”⁷

“C” stands for connect. Effective systems that connect a potential volunteer with a ministry experience are very important. The connecting process includes the development of an interview system that matches people to ministry opportunities in the church or community. Lay ministry leaders will be trained to receive people, orient them, and give them an entry-level role that is productive and satisfying.

“T” means training. As people experience ministry opportunities and discover their own area of service, continued training improves their skills and participation.

⁶ Tony Morgan and Tim Stevens, *Simply Strategic Volunteers: Empowering People for Ministry* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2005), 45.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

Hands on training help people maximize their potential, and an experienced servant leader in that ministry will apprentice the new person.

“S” stands for sustain. As people commit to serve in the congregation and community, they need assurance that the church is with them as they venture into ministry. The equipping ministry team, church staff, and ministry team leaders will reinforce the volunteers’ sense of worth. An effective ministry sustains volunteers and provides constructive feedback that raises service to higher functioning levels. Volunteers need recognition and celebration, and the Ministry Recognition Plan (Appendix 13) describes the process at FLC.

Strategy for Mobilizing Ministers Externally

The concept of apostolic mission calls believers to meet others wherever they are. FLC gathers people for worship, disciples people in small groups, and simultaneously sends them out as missionaries (Matt 9:35). The following multiple dimension strategy is aimed to reach FLC member’s personal connections, all generations, the disenfranchised, Linn County, and pockets of people throughout the world.

FLC as a Dispersion of Small Groups

The church exists wherever two or three are gathered in Jesus’ name (Matt 18:20). To break free of the notion that FLC is a building and, instead, a public testimony to Christ, FLC has adopted a decentralized small group multiplication model. FLC small groups gather in homes throughout neighborhoods in the urban, suburban, and rural areas, and in coffeehouses, restaurants, workplaces, and parks. FLC small groups often

include non-FLC friends, relatives, work and community associates, and neighbors as an intentional outreach evangelistic ministry. Small groups meet people outside the church building, at accessible times, and are inclusive in membership. Groups have grown in numbers and have established new groups led by apprentice leaders. This process has moved beyond the twentieth-century clergy dependent and hierarchal system toward a combined clergy/laity model. FLC staff and pastors have equipped and multiplied lay ministers who serve multiple generations and groups.

Reaching the Matures Generation

Persons born before 1946 may experience physical, psychological, and social limitations, and become confined in their house, apartment, or care center. Pastor Kay Slocum focused her Doctor of Ministry project on strategies designed to reach these persons through an apostolic mission effort. Slocum writes:

This study addresses the need for a wholistic pastoral care ministry of presence through congregational lay involvement with care center and home-based persons. It takes into account the present caring ministries of First Lutheran Church, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and their outreach into the surrounding community. Those persons referred to as “elderly” in this document are seventy years old and above, however, younger adults could also be well served by this ministry. The project concludes with a resource manual that outlines and describes opportunities available for serving the wholistic needs of home-based and care center residents through integrative ministries.⁸

Slocum’s manual describes the following ministries that extend the church to home or care center based people: the Deacon, Stephen, Life Review, Extended Worship, Pen Pal,

⁸ Kay M. Slocum, “Seeking a Wholistic Ministry of Presence with Elderly Adults” (D.Min. diss., Luther Seminary, 2003), ii.

Prayer Partner, Bible Study, Prayer Shawl, and Good Friends Ministries. The Deacon Ministry serves Holy Communion to home-based and care center residents. The deacons bring Jesus' message, carry love and forgiveness to people, pray with them, and connect them with FLC. Stephen Ministry serves those who experience crises in their lives through one-on-one Christian care giving. The Life Review Ministry "explores the deeply woven roots of heritage and memories of the past with home-based and care center residents to lift up the golden threads of life that add meaning to the present and purpose for the future."⁹

The Extended Worship Ministry currently serves four Care Centers and one senior apartment complex once a month. Seventeen trained worship leaders are sent on a rotation basis and preach, assist in communion, and are present with those who cannot physically attend worship at FLC. The Pen Pal ministry provides friendship, companionship, and a caring relationship for home-based or care center residents who seek communication on a regular basis through cards and/or letters.

The Prayer Partner ministry connects home-based and care center residents with a member of the faith family offers daily prayer and provides support and affirmation of God's power in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The Bible Study Ministry provides Bible study for members who are home-based or individuals or groups in care center settings. The Prayer Shawl Ministry provides shawls that are delivered to particular people in need of support. The person who created the shawl prays for the recipient of the prayer shawl on a regular basis. The Good Friends Ministry offers an intergenerational ministry of

⁹ Ibid.,117.

friendship to home-bound and care-center residents who are not able to attend congregational fellowship gatherings.

FLC has equipped forty-two deacons who serve communion monthly, sixty-two Stephen Ministers who connect weekly with their care receiver, and seventeen worship leaders to conduct five worship services in care centers once a month. A program currently in development involves a parish nurse ministry team that will extend this wholistic health model. An informal FLC survey revealed that the older generations depend upon the clergy or chaplain model of visitation. Although Deacons and Stephen Ministers reach some, many others could be connected through a regular pastoral visitation ministry. The addition of a Visitation Pastor or staff restructuring could create a regular visitation schedule program for older members isolated by physical limitations.

Reaching Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) experience many transitions including college-bound or workforce children, empty nest syndrome, and possibly retirement. Many boomers lose connection with the church after sending their children through confirmation, FLC is preparing two ministries to reach this group. The first is a small group based marriage course called: *Discover the Love of Your Life All Over Again*.¹⁰ A group of potential facilitator couples will be trained, equipped, and sent out to expand this ministry congregation-wide. FLC will launch a Kingdom Builders Ministry to network with recent retirees and equip and mobilize them in new and meaningful ministries.

¹⁰ Gary Rosberg and Barbara Rosberg, *Discover the Love of Your Life All Over Again* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2002).

Reaching Generation X (Born 1965-1980)

FLC's Milestones Ministry seeks to equip parents to be the primary faith incubators in their household in order to fulfill their promises made at baptism. The baptismal liturgy promises follow:

Parents, in Christian love you have presented these children for Holy Baptism. You should, therefore, faithfully bring them to worship, teach them the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. As they grow in years, *you should place in their hands the Holy Scriptures* and provide for him/her/them instruction in the Christian faith. That living in the covenant of their Baptism and in communion with the Church, they may lead a godly life until the day of Jesus Christ. Do you promise to fulfill this covenant? (I do.)¹¹

Although training and equipping take place in the church building, FLC can also reach out and contact parents through this critical connecting opportunity. FLC staff sets the example in this area. FLC sends ordained pastors and the Director of Children and Family Ministry on sixty home visits to families with three year olds. They deliver a colorfully illustrated, hardbound Bible, read a few stories with the child, and invite the three year olds and their families to a special program: Carnival Kick-off. This extra effort often produces an interpersonal connection that results in Sunday School attendance by the children and parental involvement in worship.

Weddings are a pivotal milestone and potential entry point for Generation Xers who may become connected or reconnected with the church. Although weddings and pre-marital counseling consumes significant amounts of time, a new pastoral mindset has emerged. These events are understood as excellent opportunities to reach this generation.

¹¹ *Lutheran Book of Worship*, "Holy Baptism" (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1978), 121.

As a result, FLC's pastors and over 100 other pastors throughout Linn County signed an agreement that addresses the astounding divorce rate in the United States. Key components of this *Marriage Matters Agreement of Linn County* (Appendix 14) that have raised the bar to this dramatic city-wide church investment include: at least a four-month period of pre-marriage counseling prior to the wedding day, a courtship of at least one year, six premarital counseling sessions (or equivalent) using a premarital inventory, and two post-marital counseling sessions with either a pastor, mentor couple, or professional counselor.

This agreement includes several other initiatives. All single persons will be encouraged to practice sexual abstinence and not live together before marriage. Relationship building programs are being offered city-wide to strengthen teens, singles, and married couples. Some churches have recruited mature married couples with healthy marriages to be trained to serve as mentors and role models for couples who are dating, engaged, newlyweds, or those who are experiencing difficulties. These churches are encouraging married couples to attend enrichment retreats and programs throughout their married life. Finally, congregations and organizations share resources to create a climate in which all marriages can succeed.

After this program was instituted, the divorce rate in Cedar Rapids decreased by five percent. FLC pastors report an increase of contacts with recently married couples who are being integrated into the life of the congregation. The couples' involvement includes participation in regular worship attendance, participation in the Alpha course

and in small groups. FLC's concentration in nurturing healthy marriages is foundational to the long-term and overall health of the congregation.

FLC is a corporate sized congregation¹² with many resources and a large prospect group aged late teens to the early thirties. FLC, however, fails to recruit a critical mass of young adults gathered for fellowship. The FLC congregation recognized these limitations and partnered with other churches in a young adult city-wide movement called Watershed (www.watershedmovement.com). Watershed is an alternative worship experience relevant to the Gen X and Millennial generations. Watershed's weekly Thursday evening worship experiences attract young adults through challenging, biblically-based teaching, personal testimonies, and contemporary music. Community experiences are encouraged through small groups, accountability groups, and formal membership in a local church.

The Watershed website reports:

Watershed is about two people: Jesus Christ and You.

There are people who have prayed to start Watershed. There are personalities who teach, and lead, and serve, and help throughout the week. There are individuals who were given a vision by God, met others with the same vision, and became a team to start this movement. But Watershed is not about them.

Watershed is about Jesus Christ. Without Jesus, Watershed doesn't exist. In Ezekiel 47:1-12, the river that brings life, the river that is a watershed for so many people, is Jesus Christ. Without him, there truly would be no life, no meaning, and definitely no Watershed. So first and foremost, this movement gains its momentum from Him.

But Watershed is also about you. Watershed was intentionally designed for young adults to grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus Christ. If you are just standing still in your spiritual journey, you are missing out.

¹² Alice Mann, *Raising the Roof* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2001), 6-8.

Watershed has been prayerfully started with the passion to see you, a Cedar Rapids young adult, grow deeper in your relationship with Jesus Christ, no matter where you are in that journey. We want to see you develop your relationship with God, with others, with yourself, and with the world.¹³

Reaching Millennials (Born 1981-1999)

Individuals face a plethora of high commitment options, and the church must compete for attention. This raises the question: “Does FLC maximize the one primary opportunity families come to on Sunday mornings or does FLC become a 24/7 non-stop church?” At this point, FLC has invested its energies and maximized its building, space, and time primarily on Sundays and Wednesdays for Millennials and their parents. FLC’s youth programs include a children’s ministry, middle school confirmation ministry, and high school ministry. A deliberate shift towards family-centered ministry is currently in the exploration stage. The youth ministries will be expanded and involve service or mission trips locally, nationally, and internationally. For example, the summer of 2006 includes inner-city service work in San Antonio, Texas, and a mission team will be sent to Mexico in 2007. These journeys are designed to stimulate an apostolic mission mindset in this generation and set a precedent for future mission and service work.

To avoid isolation and program redundancy, two city-wide youth coalitions have been developed among Lutherans and Evangelicals. Church youth leaders plan several events together that encourage the maximization of resources, increase participation, and

¹³ Erin Bird, “About Us- What is Watershed?” from *Watershed* <http://www.watershedmovement.com/pages/who.html> (accessed October 22, 2005).

build friendships. FLC has taken a lead role among Lutherans and could partner with Evangelicals for growth.

Reaching the Disenfranchised

FLC is a regional church drawing primarily economic middle to upper middle class people. Due to FLC's downtown location, the Saturday Evening Meal Program serves up to 120 disenfranchised people, including homeless people, sex offenders, and incarcerated. Some of these individuals participate in worship, Alpha, and basic needs ministries. FLC's Restorative Justice Ministry is the umbrella term for any ministry or mission involving offenders, victims, victims and offenders' families, offenders entering the justice system, incarcerated individuals, and those ready for re-integration into the community. First Lutheran Church operates this program regardless of the crimes committed.

An emerging partnership has begun with the inner-city Mission of Hope Church (A UMC Mission), and FLC has learned from their experience. A weekly support group for offenders and victims has created a synergistic partnership of shared resources and wisdom between the two churches. FLC's Staff Diaconal Minister, Pat Kane, writes:

First Lutheran Church has a current need to re-think and implement how it does "church" in the future. It must discern as a congregation how we protect our children from registered sex offenders who may re-offend, how to neutralize the negative passions of the body of Christ toward registered sex offenders, and accept and walk alongside members who may be registered sex offenders in a Christ-like way.¹⁴

¹⁴ Daniel E. Pat Kane, "Safe Sanctuary Ministry for Church, Congregation, and Registered Sex Offenders" (Diaconal Ministry Project Proposal, Lutheran Theological Seminary of Gettysburg, 2005), 2.

An implementation plan designed to reach the disenfranchised is under development. FLC's directors of youth and teen ministry worked with a task force and developed a new Safe Child Policy for First Lutheran Church. Following Diaconal committee and pastoral input, the policy will be presented to the executive committee and church council. It is designed to protect the children in the congregation from all forms of abuse defined in Iowa Statutes. The policy is a comprehensive, best practice model that FLC will share with the Synod and national church.

FLC's Restorative Justice Team includes a sub-group to develop an evaluative instrument that measures the congregation's response to restorative justice. It will also measure their thoughts and feelings toward alcoholics and drug addicts, homosexuals, HIV/AIDS victims, and registered sex offenders. After the data is processed the sub-group will assist the pastorate in preparing a teaching and preaching plan to help reduce the passions within the congregation and reinforce positions consistent with the Gospels. The Chaplain at the Sixth Judicial District Department of Corrections will train FLC volunteers in how to work with registered sex offenders based on restorative justice.

A growing interest of the FLC congregation is disenfranchised people in foster care and adoption, and upcoming adult forums will explore these issues. As Iowa grows in its median age, the care of older generations has become a concern and an important ministry. Raising congregational awareness about these disenfranchised groups may increase the ministries extended to them.

Reaching Linn County

In about 1995, a network of pastors gathered weekly in prayer and fellowship groups through the Linn County Association of Evangelicals. These relationships and discussion have moved local churches to demonstrate the love of Christ in the greater Cedar Rapids area through collaborative prayer, care, and share efforts. In partnership with Mission America, Cedar Rapids has become one of nine pilot cities, and the Vision and Strategic Planning Teams for *Serve the City* are crafting a detailed plan for a unified prayer initiative. All worshippers in the participating churches will receive a bookmark on which they can write the names of people they will pray for daily to know the Lord. The network of some thirty to fifty churches will post a huge canvas of the Cedar Rapids skyline, and participants will write names on the canvas. City-wide initiatives to “love our communities to Christ through genuine care” will culminate on a designated weekend. See Appendix 15 for the Serve The City brochure and Timeline.

Reaching the World

To heed Jesus’ command to go into the world (Matt 28:19-20), FLC has developed a strategy to build long-term into ongoing relationships with particular people around the world. FLC has sent people overseas before, but the relationships were not maintained long-term. FLC has learned from these past experiences.

In the summer of 2006, FLC will send its first Service Team to Tanzania. In the summer of 2007, FLC will send a youth service team to Mexico and cooperate with a Cedar Rapids church that has an established relationship with a community in Mexico.

The purpose of these efforts is to develop long-term relationships based on correspondence and visits that edify Christian communities in mission. The United States no longer only sends missionaries to Africa and elsewhere; other nations now send missionaries to the United States. Christians can learn and strengthen one another, and further the gospel worldwide. These outreach initiatives are based on this paper's thesis that sound strategies can be developed that mature, equip, and mobilize Christians for missional ministry.