

Pastoral Interviews
Report for Week of: 8-5-98
Number of Calls: 10
Number of Conferences: 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The ten pastors who were asked about which Bible study series they used for preparing people for baptism responded with: Discover (5); Amazing Facts (3); La Fe Jesus (3); Prophecy Seminar by Russell Burrill (2); Encounter (1); In His Steps (1); Marshall Grosball's (1); Revelation Seminar (1); 20th Century (1).

Two types of suggestions were made regarding changing, improving or creating something new. The first was on making something appeal to young people and young adults. One pastor said the Adult SS Quarterly and Collegiate Quarterly totally miss the teens and college students in his church. Another wants to a series to reach the unchurched. And a third spoke of seeing an interactive, multi-media, CD-ROM series made for computers.

The other suggestions focused on the bent of the studies. Three pastors made related comments on "A deeper focus on Christ as Saviour—not so legalistic or doctrinally focused" and "More Christ-center, less doctrine-centered", and "Emphasize the relational aspect of our walk with God, not at the expense of doctrine, but showing that this is the purpose of doctrine".

2. Four of ten pastors say their churches have a vision statement. Three of them are "written" down. The other pastor said their vision is "To finish the work in Texas." Three of the four pastors say their vision statements were in place before they arrived. One pastor suggested that if a resource was created to help congregations create vision/mission statements, that lots of examples be listed in an appendix. Another church has a "motto" that reads: "The progressive church with the upward look." The church is actually somewhat conservative but "wants" to be on the cutting edge.

3. Four of ten pastors have seen A.C.N.'s Cross Training programs (or at least one program). Several commented positively and didn't have any suggestions. A few stated that they (meaning themselves as pastors) needed to do a better job of promoting A.C.N. programs. Several record programs and keep a library. One especially liked the effort to provide variety in programs for different church officers. Four pastors in this interview have Spanish speaking churches and would like programming in Spanish.

Other suggestions include making the programs shorter (1 hour or 1 1/2 hrs.). One person heard Ron Gladden at Seeds '98 and suggested him as a great presenter. Another said the program on prayer was too long and the presenter (didn't say who) turned off some of his members. A pastor from Canada said from a distance it looks like A.C.N. and 3ABN are not collaborating very much and he would encourage more of this. And another pastor

complained that Net '96 burned him out (all the work he went to for the meetings). He also complained that he has lots of expensive equipment with nobody to run it in one of his churches. And he also was unhappy with the change to digital, which means all his money goes down the tube since his equipment will be obsolete.

4. The most common suggestion for vibrant worship services given by pastors focused on a "sharing time" (or "testimonies" or "prayer request time", etc.). One pastor has a 10 minute slot called "Open Church" that focuses on praises by members to often about other members. Other tips that speak about program elements include: Use short dramas before the sermon, project songs, use creativity in communion services, use PowerPoint for sermons (Mark Finley has materials...), and try "thematic" song services.

On a more philosophical level, a couple pastors simply stressed the importance of using variety in worship to reach more people. Another pastor focused on talking about the preaching. He said, "The main thing I try to do is preach Christ and the plan of salvation. Everything else comes after that." None of the pastors gave any reference to specific materials, resources, books, or seminars.

Pastor: DB
Conference: Texas
Church(es)/Position: 3 churches

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

The Prophecy Seminar, the one updated from the old Daniel Seminar, Seminars Unlimited. There are a few lessons I wish they would give a little more information on. I create my own notes for this purpose. Otherwise it's a great series. I like the way it starts in Daniel ... making a commitment to the Lord.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

We've never really written a statement as such. We've talked about it. Two of our churches are in the midst of a fundraising (building) drive. After this, the people want to be more outreach oriented...

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

No, haven't seen the Cross Training. I saw the four guys a few months back (with Dwight Nelson, etc.). None of us have a dish, although we just purchased one and need to get it set up. One lady does have a dish and she records a lot of programs from 3ABN.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

The main thing is what I try to do for years, preach Christ and the plan of salvation, and every thing else comes after that. I get weary of the pressure to have so many baptisms. I wish people in higher places would understand the pressure they give. I think commitment is important. Baptisms without commitment are useless.

Pastor: RC

Conferece: Texas

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

For the Hispanics, Le Fe Jesus. For the anglo church, I use Encounter, In His Steps, and Amazing Facts. I would like to see more audio-visual (video). Not just sermons on video tape, but CD-ROM or computer or multi-media interactive. For the new generation, they are more attracted to this stuff than a book.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

No we don't but we're working on that.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

Yes, watch Cross Training. My opinion is that its very good. I see that this training is for many departments and I like that. For now I'm pleased.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

I have a VERY conservative church that is quite traditional. The other one has more young people. Sometimes I have a 5 minute skit before the sermon. We've tried variations on picking up the offering. Sometimes we have a Communion Service in a rented facility with lots of decorations, cross-shaped tables, etc. We sometimes project songs during song service or print them in the bulletin. I try to encourage participation.

We have a sharing time talking about outreach, or introducing new friends they bring to church. Communication is important among the members.

Pastor: LD

Conference: Texas

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

The Net '96 Bible study series. I like the Steps to Christ that Marshall Grosball created. He died in a plane crash. I really like them. I really think we need to zero in more on the aspect of the Savior. Some studies leave me filling empty as an Adventist, borderline on legalism. I'm on a personal quest right now to get to know God more deeply. There are some good books from a long time ago by a guy named Meade McGuire. There are some neat ones out, a set for the busy person, a black pastor helps me. Really neat. They are really concise. Set up for the busy person.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

Not these churches. I have them in different churches. Basically we've worked on it. The Net '98 materials have a vision statement we use.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

No. I'm very frustrated with A.C.N. programs. I had Net '96, three at once. When there's no "success", the people are unhappy... and all this stuff hit me like an avalanche to keep up with. We have lots of equipment that sits around but don't have a person to run it. My other church has someone. And now we understand the equipment is going digital so the equipment will be obsolete. It's a constant challenge. I've enjoyed some of the programs. Too much coming at us. So much emphasis on keeping the school going.

Conflict seems to keep me doing everything than what I should be doing. Every church has those. Its keeping pastors busy. I'm out visiting, giving Bible studies. Haven't done a lot of training here. I've been thinking about starting this up again. My health has been holding me down. Net '96 burned me out. I'm still recovering. Training people is difficult because the commitment of people is so low. A real spiritual problem here.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

I have stuff that comes in the mail from other Adventist pastors, neat stuff, a memo here, an idea there. There's a few guys here in Texas who are in to that.

I think Monte needs to have a different set of questions. I think there needs to be some place where pastors can call in for some sort of support group. And that clergy line doesn't work. They listen for awhile and then basically say, "I can't help you." And you can't do open up your heart within your conference, because guys will call up the conference and get you into trouble. Its an isolated and lonely job. I do like Steve Gifford. He's great. Very encouraging. Lifting people up. You need to design questions that go right to the heart of a pastor, no names asked. We need support. I think pastors and leaders need to be in complete solidarity... [Did a lot of listening about conflicts he's gone through, people who have attacked him in church business meetings, conference leaders who didn't always back him up, etc.]

Pastor: JF

Conference: Texas

Church(es)/Position: (Hispanic) 3 churches, 1 company (His son translated for him.)

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

Le Fe Jesus, Revelation Seminar, and Amazing Facts. Everything is good. No suggestions.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

Not written, but to finish the work in Texas.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

Yes. One does. They watch Hispanic programs. He has only heard of Cross Training programs, but hasn't watched, because its in English.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

We try to use variety. We seek to reach a variety of people in the congregation, involving them in the service. We start services early.

Pastor: LD

Conference: Alberta

Church(es)/Position: 1 church, 1 company

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

The Discover Bible series, and occasionally the 20th Century. Discover is excellent. I wish we had something for the totally unchurched.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

Yes. Actually there was one here when I came. We put it before the church. I made copies for everybody to take home. Had a business meeting and discussed and decided to stick with it.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

Yes. Watched a couple Cross Training. We record all of them and put in a library. The church hasn't been aware enough of the programs—probably might fault in part. So, I probably need to raise more awareness. The one on prayer, there was some good information, but the presenter turned some people off. It was also too long—2 hours. I'd prefer 1 hour or 1 1/2. Handouts were helpful.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

Basically we've worked out our own thing here. We have a broad spectrum of people, nationalities. We're traditional, but have put in some things for the young people. Children's story, children's songs.

Pastor: IH

Conference: Alberta

Church(es)/Position: 1 church

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

I don't normally use a series. I pick up people where they are. Mostly the Discovery Bible series. I think the Sabbath School quarterly is missing the mark. If you follow those lessons for 4 years, they should be well indoctrinated. I think they contain too much information and don't let people discover the Bible themselves. I don't have the answers, but I do know most of our young people aren't grabbed by even the Collegiate Quarterly.

I almost insist that people join a small group as part of becoming a member. Doing it alone doesn't work. We need an environment for these people. That's my greatest fear with Net '98, is not enough groups for them to be absorbed.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

Yes. I'm actually out of the field of education. But I would recommend people collect a lot of different vision/mission/value statements.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

Yes. I find them to long. Shorter, crisper. Sometimes I get the idea that the presenters are waffling. They're not always crisp. One hour instead of two. I really enjoyed Ron Gladden's at Seeds and he'd be great on camera. It does seem to me as a person from a distance, there could be more cooperation between A.C.N. and 3ABN. They do seem to be collaborating at all.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

Yes. I think we are onto something good. I've inherited a great attitude in my congregation. I'm building on that. We have something called "Open Church". A ten minute slot where anyone can express their praise to God ... for another member, or for some kindness in their life. We also have a Garden of Prayer time that is different. It works with difficulty, but it works. Some feel it's a waste of time. Probably they'd miss it if we quit.

Pastor: RJ

Conference: Alberta

Church(es)/Position: 3 churches

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

Probably I've used recently the VOP, the Discovery Bible series. I'd like to see our Bible studies more ... less doctrine oriented and more Christ-centered. We feel if we indoctrinate them, we have them in the church. A doctrine in and of itself doesn't make a person a better Christian. Doctrines should show us a better picture of God. (I'm probably sounding like Maxwell.) In the Sabbath school lessons, I've tried to do this ... how things show us a better picture of God.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

One church. It was around before I came in. I think the head elder worked on it. We worked on it with him, but it was basically his statement.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

No dish in any church. I get the information, but don't see them.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

Each of my churches has a completely different format. We had a visitor who attended two different churches and commented that we Adventists have a lot of variety in worship services. We have an open time where people can give praise or prayer requests. We have some music. The sermon is about 1/2 hour long. Try to have variety.

Pastor: WG

Conference: Texico

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

I would change it, and I want to be careful what I say, I think I would have a greater emphasis on the "relational" aspect of a person with Christ. I'd show how the various doctrines tie into that relationship. Make it permanent. Yet, I would still use lessons that cover the things like the Dark Day and Falling of the Stars. I.e. wouldn't quit the old stuff, but mix with the relational emphasis.

To be honest with you, when a study comes across my desk, I pass it on to my members.

I use Russell's Burrill's (Prophecy Seminar), Amazing Facts, and Discover Bible school materials (VOP). I do a pastor's class. I go into heavier the covenant God has and wants with His people.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

No. We've been talking about it recently. But its pretty understood that its evangelism and church growth. We have a motto at one: "The progressive church with the upward look." The church is conservative (doesn't want a celebration emphasis for example) but wants to be cutting edge.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

Yes. No, I think it appears well thought out. We'll often tape it and give to the appropriate people. We like the A.C.N. but need to use it more. I'd like to suggest in the area of, but somehow, nominating committee needs to be revamped. For instance, at one of my churches, I have the privilege of choosing my own elders. It builds a good trust relationship. If the Division can encourage some flexibility on nominating committee, it would really help me. I sometimes have elders that are pain to work with, and this helps to eliminate that problem. I'm really fortunate with the team spirit we have here.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

I'm using the materials from Mark Finley, powerpoint, sermon illustrations. I'm also wanting to put more into my "testimony" time. Vibrant, pertinent, recent.

Pastor: EL

Conference: Texico

Church(es)/Position: 1 church, retired, Hispanic church (used a translator)

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

He uses something he found in Oregon, but doesn't know the name.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

No.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

Would be interested in last day prophecies coming true, and how to prepare for the end times. No dishes, but video tapes from other churches. Would like them in Spanish.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

Regarding song services, thematic song services. Talks about things like "creation" and then does a series of songs on this theme, etc. Will say something about the author or when the song was written.

Pastor: PL

Conference: Texico

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

My two churches are Spanish. I use La Fe Jesus. No suggestions for changing.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

No.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

Yes. One church does. Never saw Cross Training.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

No suggestions.