

Introduction

The following is a strategy for a Postmodern/Gen X church plant in Frankfort, Kentucky. This strategy is not to be a "blueprint" for this church, but to highlight the need and then to "cast a vision" for a ministry that will fulfill or address that need. Proverbs warns us that "where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). This vision is not meant just to produce a structure for a church, but rather to infect people with a new attitude towards doing and being the church in order to reach a specific target.

Area Information:

Why Frankfort?

Frankfort is the capital of Kentucky with a capital need. Frankfort is a growing community nestled in the heart of the "Bluegrass State". Although it is the capital, it is not the largest city in Kentucky, but is perfectly situated between the two largest cities in the state: Louisville and Lexington. Frankfort currently has about 49,000 people in its limits with a projected population of over 50,000 by 2004. Frankfort is also home to Kentucky State University, a medium sized University with just over 3,000 students. Almost one-third of the cities' population falls in the age bracket of fifteen to thirty five. A large portion of this section of the population represents the Postmodern and Generation X community in Frankfort.

Frankfort is over 200 years old. Much of the older parts of Frankfort are still intact today. This area is known as "downtown" Frankfort. It is located on the banks of the Kentucky River. This portion of town has a unique feel. The city is still trying to

capture or preserve a quaint or eccentric sense. One area in particular is in the center of downtown called St. Clair Mall. St. Clair Mall is a picturesque region, a cobblestone street lined with old multiple story buildings. The buildings on the sides face each other with the "mall" in between. This area gives an "artsy" vibe in and of itself. Beyond this the people and the shops in this area foster this impression. It is in this type of atmosphere where a postmodern/Gen X crowd would feel at home.

One of the buildings on St. Clair Mall is *Kelly's Garden Cafe*. *Kelly's* opened about four years ago. Two college students from Frankfort began this little restaurant endeavor, but was intended to be much more than the average restaurant. *Kelly's* hosted poetry and literature readings and even an occasional eclectic band. On an average Friday night *Kelly's Garden Cafe* would be packed out with college age men and women sipping *Folger's instant* coffee or instant cappuccinos and listening to whatever happened to be on the agenda. About a year ago, *Kelly's* made transition. It seems that the restaurant had some legal problems that involved the Health Board and licensing. After that the owners decided to pursue other interests and sold the business. It still operates under the same name, but the Friday evening format was annulled and thus *Kelly's Garden Cafe* reaches a different clientele.

It is obvious that there is a postmodern/Gen X crowd in Frankfort, but what specifically are churches doing to address this generation and their needs? Frankfort should not be Spiritually illiterate. There are about sixty-five evangelical churches of various denominations listed in Frankfort's phone book. Thirty-six of them are Baptist churches. A survey of five of the largest churches in this area proved that very little of a concentrated effort towards reaching this group is being done by the church. One pastor

even noted that the biggest obstacle in reaching this age group was the church itself or the churches in this communities' methods in reaching this group. Not one church in Frankfort is specifically targeting this group of young men and women in order to evangelize and disciple them. Most churches in Frankfort are steeped in dogma and traditional ways or methods in getting the message of the Gospel to people.

Strategy:

Vertical Horizons Church is a Biblically based church, built upon Act 2:42-47, *“They devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.”* This church possesses a ferocious commitment to Christ’s Commandment: *“To go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”* (Matthew 28: 19,20). We stand upon Christ’s promise *“To build His Church and the gates of Hades will not stand against it”*.

Purpose:

To turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ.

Mission:

To create a place where people belong (Community), by showing unconditional love through meeting people's needs (Compassion), and helping them make God the center of their lives (Core).

Vision:

Community

"They devoted themselves to... the fellowship, to the breaking of bread...

All the believers were together and had everything in common. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts" Acts 2: 42, 44, 46

If Postmodernity has brought forth one thing it would be a cry for realness and sincerity in people and in their relationships. Postmoderns are, by majority, found to be jaded and cynical about life in general. The end of Modernism produced this hurried/busy approach to doing life. Relationships got crowded out beyond the margins of our lives. This left the generation to follow searching for significant relationships, but expecting trust to be betrayed and promises to be broken. Postmoderns are hungry for a place where their language is spoken, where they are understood for who they are, and why they are who they are. They are sick of the religious façade of feeling the need to appear to have it all together when they are at church. They desire a place where they are free to be... no strings attached.

This is the atmosphere that the book of Acts describes as being the church.

Vertical Horizons Church believes that a radical commitment to each other is a

significant value, and that it is part of the redemptive work of Christ. The first church possessed a genuine desire to be together. Today's life is in stark contrast to this type of togetherness, but this sincerity of heart is simply a reflection of God's heart. God desires to be our God and for us to be His people (Hebrews 8:10). This is community.

Vertical Horizons Church will teach this value, but above this the leadership will exemplify it. Community will be an evangelistic tool as well. People will be drawn to place that just doesn't talk about love but exhibits love through utter acceptance, unity, transparency, and accountability. Church was given to also be a Spiritual Discipline. This only comes through sharing in real intimacy

Compassion

"Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need" Acts 2:45

As Christ walked on this earth, the Bible says that He would experience a divinely motivated stirring called compassion. According to the New Testament authors on every occasion that Jesus had compassion for someone, He would then reach out and meet their need in a tangible fashion. It appears that the trend would be; Jesus sees a need, compassion rises in Him, He reaches out and specifically meets or addresses that need. (Matthew 9:36, Matthew 14:14, Matthew 20:34, Mark 1:41, Mark 9:22, Luke 7:13-15)

Moderns were able to sort and separate things like God, spirituality, relational ideas, and sexuality. It appeared that they had nice little compartments to place each idea, thus keeping a little boarder around each mental concept. Postmodernism has blurred the boundaries around such things, most of all their suppositions about God. A Christian would ask, "What about your relationship with God?" and a Postmodern would

reply, “What about Buddha or Muhammad?” To a Postmodern nothing is a given and nothing is taboo. This has left a generation with satirical taste in their mouths towards life and things like goodness, kindness, and the American dream. Generation X is not interested in catchy phrases about love. They are searching for real, relentless acts of love. Broken and estranged relationships with their parents and other family members have evoked this sarcastic sentiment. Beyond just a mere sentiment these ideas and thoughts have contaminated every action and reaction. Cynicism leaves one extremely empty. “Hope deferred makes the heart sick” according to the book of Proverbs. We have an entire generation of sick hearted, broken, and hurting people. Vertical Horizons Church desires to mimic Christ by seeing this generation’s needs, Spiritual needs and felt needs, and then allowing God to place in us His compassion, and then reach out in practical ways to meet those needs. We believe that compassion equals action.

It is the desire of Vertical Horizons Church to provide as many opportunities possible to meet a plethora of needs. We envision meeting felt needs through a food pantry, financial assistance programs, and various community service projects. These programs are intended to be tailored to the congregation, their needs and the people they are in contact with, specific needs. We also desire to host numerous seminars for the church and community. Examples would be Financial Seminars, Tips on How to Purchase a Home, Parenting and Building Healthy Families, etc. We would also want to offer sort of theological symposiums to challenge lost or new believing thinkers on such matters as to Who God Is and The Deity of Christ. We refuse to shy away from deep subjects. It is our intention for Vertical Horizons to be a sort of “free speech” place where people can sit in small groups in comfortable couches or around tables, sip

Cappuccino and discuss the validity of faith in God and Christ. Attempting to answer these questions and sort through such subjects is compassion, love in action. Even our approach to community is compassionate. In fact we believe that it is impossible to have community without compassion. Compassion is what drives us to engage with each other deeply so that community happens. Community will meet and satisfy needs as well.

Core

“They devoted themselves to the apostle’s teachings...and to prayer” Acts 2:42

Vertical Horizons Church is totally without compromise built upon the eternal foundation of God and His Holy Word. It is our belief that God knows and understands the complexity of this culture and its people far more than we ever can or will. All the hurts, problems, and brokenness of Generation X can be alleviated through the power of God working in and through their lives. The paramount focus of this ministry is to challenge and then lead people into a real, vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ. This entity of our vision is by far the most important to us. Making God the core of our lives means we take irreligious people and make them believers, and then take believers and make them worshippers.

We will accomplish this through an uncompromising stand to quality praise and worship. Music is a major portion of the making and the lives of Generation X. Likewise, Vertical Horizons Church will place a serious importance on music. Beyond music we will allow the Spirit to guide believers into God’s presence through worship. We believe that worship is to be done with utmost emphasis upon musical excellence. Most musical services will be celebrative and enthusiastic, but we will also depend upon the

unction of the Holy Spirit to lead us into a time of reverence and reflection. Worship has an evangelistic value as well. We believe that it is impossible for unbelievers to worship God, but they can be drawn to surrender through believer's concomitant worship of Him.

Discipleship plays a vital role in helping people make God the center of their lives. We hold discipleship at the forefront of all that we do. We believe that it is essential for our church to be committed to serious study and application of the Scriptures. Teaching converts the Spiritual disciplines of a holy and acceptable life to God is extremely significant to our values as a community of believers. Teaching people practical ways of sharing their faith with others is an objective of ours. We feel that evangelism is not completed until the evangelized becomes an evangelist. Our small group mentality is riveted together with a commitment to discipleship. Every small group meets on the premise to lead and teach each other to further themselves in God.

Core is the essential element beneath our entire mission statement. We believe that it is impossible to have true compassion without having a relationship with God (core). God is the greatest need in people's lives. Our church will strive to build an atmosphere that teaches people to reach up (vertical) to allow God to fill them with Himself, and to reach out (horizontal) to meet needs in others.

Approach:

Vertical Horizons Church will accomplish the mission and live out its vision through:

1. Employing people's Spiritual giftedness in order to produce a holistic worship experience, including technology with an artistic flavor.
2. Building, implementing, and fostering life changing small groups; built upon affinity, Spiritual giftedness, community service, or a common Spiritual journey.
3. A "no-holds-barred/no compromise" approach to relevant Biblical truths, taught in a practical manner.
4. Intense discipleship programs, we will use a three-track system: Growth, Gifts, and God Given Direction.
5. Making the church a resource center through: hosting practical seminars, a food pantry, and other community service projects.

The Birth Stage:

The Launch will be a church with a coffee house atmosphere. Because this church is mobile it will be impossible to offer coffee and this type of setting every service, but the launching service will nevertheless be the typical type of service minus the coffee.

The first service will be held in a rented gymnastics and dance studio. The room is rather large with vaulted ceilings and carpet on the floor. A decorating team will set the room up to look like a coffee shop. We will rent tables of various sizes and chairs for people to sit in, arranged in a casual manor. On the right side of the room will be a coffee bar where coffee, cappuccino, juices, water, and possibly some sort of baked goods will be available. In the front left corner of the room will be a stage, equipped with speakers, monitors, mics, instruments, and a stand for the speaker to put his stuff on. The lighting will be dim with some candles and extra lighting on the stage. There will be two screens set up for visual effects. One screen will be behind the stage on which artistic technological effects will be displayed on, the other screen will be to the right of the stage on which the words of the worship songs, the speaker's notes, and even a some thematic multimedia presentations will be projected. Whenever no live music is being played, music from various Christian CD's will be playing through the speakers. Everything movable in the building will be set up by the "set up crew" two and a half-hours before the service to allow time for sound checks, etc. The dress for the church will be casual.

As the visitor (dressed casually) pulls into one of the "visitor only" parking spots and begins to enter the building, he will be greeted by a lay person (dressed casually) from the "greeting team". The "greeter" will welcome the visitor, direct him to the nursery (staffed by trained nursery workers from the core group) to drop off their children, and then help him find a table. Once at the table the greeter will give the visitor information about the church, an outline of the sermon, and a card which the visitor can fill out and leave on the table, and tell invite visitor to the coffee bar.

As the visitor sips on a warm cup of French vanilla cappuccino and chats with a few acquaintances, the coffee bar will close (after fifteen to twenty minutes) and the band will walk up on the stage. The band will be made up of a guitarist (or two), a bass player, a drummer, a keyboard player, a singer (worship leader), and back-up singers (unless other band members can sing back-up). The music will have an alternative edge to it (for example, Skillet's praise CD put out by Ardent Worship). The worship will be holistic in nature allowing the person to worship with the whole of their being (mind, emotions, etc.). In some cases secular songs will be drawn in to support the service's theme.

The band will play an extremely upbeat song (the words to all the songs will be projected on the screen). Then the worship leader will say a short welcome, read a psalm, pray, then lead the crowd in two praise songs. Someone from the service team will then read or recite a passage of Scripture relevant to the worship or that day's message. After four or five more songs of praise (that are correlated with that day's message) a short drama or multimedia presentation will be done that goes along with the main point of the sermon. After the drama or other presentation the pastor will get up on the stage and present the message for that day. The message will be relevant to the Gen X lifestyle and at the same time it will be true to God's word. The message will be brought out of an understandable version of the Bible (NIV, NAS). It will not be a long message, probably within the bounds of twenty to twenty-five minutes. An invitation will be given at the end of the sermon, but not a traditional invitation. The people in the crowd will be invited to come and sit at one of the designated table if they have questions about the sermon, if they just want to talk to someone, or if they want to give their life to Christ. At the designated tables, trained counselors (from the core group) will be waiting

to talk if anyone responds. The band will then play a couple of more songs and the coffee bar will be opened back up and will stay open until 11:00 that night. On some nights there will be a concert after the service put on by a Christian band suited to reach the Gen X culture.

After the service the visitor is free to leave or hang out for a while. When the visitor is ready to leave, he will pick up his child from the nursery and proceed out the door where he will again be met by a “greeter” who will give him a sheet of paper announcing what’s going on in the church and will extend an invitation to come back.

After the coffee bar closes, everything in the building will be taken down and put in trailers (by the “tear down crew”) where it all will be stored until the next week.

As the church progresses services would change from week to week in nature. We would never compromise the presentation of the Gospel, but we will use every possible avenue to present that Gospel. For example, as the drama small group grows we would present a full-scale play that would encompass the entire service. We want to draw on the curiosity of the people. Familiarity breeds contempt, so the last thing we would want to produce or desire would be to be familiar. The band and even speaker would change periodically to reflect that.

The Growth Stage:

Discipleship

Our approach to discipleship is that discipleship happens continuously on our journeys with God. More than giving people specific times to learn about God, we want to create an atmosphere that cultivates and instructs people in forming discipleship habits.

The primary place for this to occur is in small groups. Vertical Horizons Church is not a church that has small groups, but rather a church that's entirety is small groups. A community of believers doing life together in small groups. We believe that affinity is the main element in the cohesion of small groups. The church's focus will be on drawing attention to individual's natural affinities. Discipleship classes or small groups will be offered in three tracks.

God Given Direction

Several classes and one weekend retreat will be offered in this track. These classes will deal with the direction of people's lives (plan of salvation), the direction of this ministry, and the direction of people's lives in this ministry. These classes will be similar to Saddleback Community Church's 101, 201, 301, but will be formatted for our context. A large portion of these classes will focus on Spiritual Giftedness. We will draw from Saddleback's S.H.A.P.E. curriculum and other tools to help people to understand their exact God given gift and calling to empower this work. Also included in this track will be the mandatory new membership classes. Due to the specific calling of this ministry we feel it necessary to block out a time to meet with a group seeking membership in order to fully cast the vision of this church. The weekend retreat will be at the end of the track, and it will summarize the entire lessons. We feel that pulling away from people's day to day stresses and lives, in order to make a fuller commitment to God, creates an environment unlike any other for people to grow and learn. We feel that this weekend getaway will sear people's hearts for their God given direction in life.

Gifts

Vertical Horizons Church places a strong emphasis on Spiritual giftedness. The onus is upon the church to help the congregation to discover and implement their Spiritual giftedness. People will discover their gift make-up in our 301 class in the God given direction track, but in the gift track we desire to specifically customize classes and small groups to instruct people to employ their gifts in the most pragmatic manner possible. Some small groups will be formed from a giftedness affinity, placing like gifted people together in order to raise their gift temperatures. Classes with a small group feel will teach people more about their gifts and how to use them. God calls the church to be good stewards of the people and their giftedness by providing an adequate environment for people to exercise their giftedness to edify the body and ultimately give honor to God.

Growth

Paul implores us to desire solid food and not milk. The growth track is designed to prompt people towards Spiritual maturity. Most of these will be classes with a designated teacher, but with a small group atmosphere. Most of the curriculum will be from *Lifeway*. We will offer classes like Experiencing God, Making Peace with Your Past, Celebrate Recovery from Saddleback Community Church, and Breaking the Cycle of Hurtful Families. Beyond this we will extend classes to the congregation that will be in-depth studies of the Bible, including several surveys. It would be our desire that as the church grows to use a branch of this track to be actual classes taken from a Bible College on our campus, whether through extension or correspondence classes.