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# GC2 equipper

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*Equipping for active sharing with Jesus in his Great Commandment – Great Commission ministry.*

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Christmas greetings!

What joy it is to celebrate Jesus' birth! Through the incarnation of the Son of God, God became human. In Jesus, God became one of us. He is Immanuel—*God with us!*

In the season of Advent, we appropriately look *back* to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. But we also look *around* and *forward*, informed by the truth that Jesus' incarnation continues. Jesus remains fully divine (as God the Son) and fully human (as Jesus the man, now glorified and in heaven, see 1Tim. 2:5 and Acts 17:31).



God, in the person of Jesus, is with us, for us, and one of us, *still*.

I pray that you, your family and your congregation find deep assurance this season in the stunning truth that all people, through Jesus' continuing incarnation, are included in God's love and life. Through the representative and substitutionary birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, we are all adopted by God—given, in Jesus, a new identity, a new home, and a secure future. *Rejoice and believe!*

This assurance and knowledge is part of the joy of this season, which powerfully proclaims to us the gospel of our inclusion. I pray that Advent affords you the opportunity to share this joy-filled message with others, and to make plans with God-sized vision for participating with Jesus in his ministry during the year ahead. This issue is directed toward helping you in your congregational planning.



Ted Johnston  
GC2 equipper editor

P.S. We have posted *Christmas Readers Theater* dramatic readings at [www.wcg.org/MinDev/](http://www.wcg.org/MinDev/) (click on "GC2 equipper" and look under "related resources"). Thanks to Rick Shallenberger for providing this resource.

## Making ministry plans for 2009

Though Jesus, in his glorified humanity, is in heaven, he continues the Father's work here on earth through his body the church. The Spirit sent by Jesus, forms, gifts and sends the church to fulfill the Father's mission to multiply followers of Jesus.

What are your congregation's plans to participate in ministry with Jesus in the year ahead?

Unfortunately, small churches often fail to plan, as noted in the following article, which first appeared in the November 11, 2008 issue of *The Christian Post*. Thanks to WCG pastor and DPL Ray Meyer for bringing this article to our attention.



### ***Study: Poor Planning Impedes Small Church Progress***

Small churches often get most of the equation right when it comes to making progress, but the one major mistake they make is poor planning, according to a recent study.

An overwhelming majority of pastors of small churches (94 percent) say they see the need and problems in their community that the church has been called to address, and eight out of 10 say they share with their congregation a clear and compelling picture of what God is calling their church to look like in several years, LifeWay Research's latest study shows. But 67 percent of pastors of small churches say they are frustrated with how slow progress is being made at their churches.

"The effectiveness of local church ministry often is jeopardized by poor organization," diagnosed Scott McConnell, associate director of LifeWay Research. "Understanding God's calling and the context of the church is important, but leadership requires knowing where you are, knowing where you need to go and knowing how to get there. Most pastors of small churches actively pursue the first two, but many struggle with the third."

LifeWay surveyed 350 Southern Baptist pastors of congregation that average fewer than 100 in primary worship attendance.

Many pastors openly admitted that they do not know how to lead their churches to achieve their goal.

Only 29 percent of pastors of small churches strongly agreed that they had a clear plan to transform their churches into what God wanted them to be. But a significantly higher number of pastors expressed confusion about their plan and the problems along the way. 44 percent of the surveyed pastors agreed (somewhat or strongly) that they often do not understand why things do not work out, while 30 percent agreed that they are confused about where they should invest their own time and effort.

The survey revealed that although 70 percent of the pastors said their church budget was enough to fund current objectives, 40 percent agreed that their church rarely has time to reflect and plan properly. For instance, two-thirds of the small churches rarely change the person in charge of certain work or responsibilities. And less than six in ten churches regularly review methods and results of events and programs.

"The survey clearly indicates that smaller-membership churches need to stop and evaluate what they are doing and who is doing it," McConnell said. "Leaders need to develop effective plans for carrying out the work God has called their churches to do." He added, "Pastors who candidly assess their own strengths and weaknesses can surround themselves with leaders who have the talents that they lack." "Each local church should seek out and utilize members gifted in organizing people and processes while still encouraging each other to desire the greater gifts of faith, hope, and love."

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## Help in ministry planning

The WCG Ministry Development Team (MDT) provides seminars and consulting services to assist congregations in establishing short and long-term plans to focus its participation in ministry with Jesus.

The purpose for ministry planning is not to supplant the Spirit's work, but to steward faithfully the gifts the Spirit provides for our participation with Jesus in his ongoing ministry. Note Peter's counsel: "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1Peter 4:10, NASB).

These grace-gifts of the Spirit include *administration* (1Cor. 12:28) and *leadership* (Rom. 12:8). Appropriate stewardship of these gifts will typically include serving the body through ministry planning. The purpose of such planning is prayerfully to set forth strategies for journeying together with Jesus as he fulfills the Father's mission in and through the church.

For the last several years, the Ministry Development Team has helped congregational leaders participate in effective ministry planning through preparation of a "Ministry Vision Document" – a detailed plan for participating as a congregation in ministry with Jesus. This vision document typically includes the following five elements:

1. **Core Values:** the non-negotiable commitments that undergird all the congregation is and does.
2. **Mission Statement:** a short, but meaningfully detailed statement of the congregation's specific focus in fulfilling the Great Commission.
3. **Vision Statement:** a compelling, detailed description of what the congregation will "look like" when it is fulfilling its mission.
4. **Key Result Areas (KRAs):** a list of a few principal ministry concerns toward which the congregation's programming will be targeted.
5. **Strategic goals:** specific, measurable objectives related to each KRA. Some goals are *work goals* (things that the congregation can begin to work on directly) and some are *faith goals* (things that are the focus of prevailing prayer—asking God to provide what is not yet present).

Advice related to preparing a vision document is available on the WCG Ministry Development website at [www.wcg.org/mindev/](http://www.wcg.org/mindev/). We also recommend reading "Ministry Nuts and Bolts" by Aubrey Malphurs.

Ministry Development Team members offer WCG congregations and pastoral networks consultation by email, telephone and personal visit. Team members also conduct seminars related to church planning including *Strategic Planning for Congregations*. To contact a team member see "contacting the MDT" at [www.wcg.org/MinDev/events.htm](http://www.wcg.org/MinDev/events.htm).



"The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we hit it."

-Michelangelo

