

# Achieving Church Growth THROUGH CELL MINISTRY



**The Church in Many Houses: Reaching Your Community Through Cell-Based Ministry**, by *Bill Cordle*; edited by *Tom Bandy & Bill Easum*. What kind of church do you want to give your life to? If you are searching for a practical way for your church to move beyond worship attendance and outward compliance and really build on the priorities and practices of Jesus Christ, then this book is a must-read. Not just another “follow-these-ten-steps-and-your-church-will-grow” book, it is written by the pastor of a growing cell church who, rather than settle for an ordinary church that calls people to believe, give, and behave, strives to lead the development of an authentic, life-changing community in which people are transformed into the life and character of Jesus through cell-based ministry. By drawing on Scripture, research, and insights gained through personal experience, the author identifies four pivotal philosophical shifts necessary for the cell approach to work: a shift from programs to relationships; a shift from members to disciple-makers; a shift from educating to equipping; and a shift from “come and see” to “go and show.” IZ5-068732579X. Paper, \$15.00

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# OPEN FORUM

Evidently the confusion about the spelling of “itineracy” was a preview of coming attractions about The United Methodist Church and its use of itineracy. Granted John Wesley and Francis Asbury were committed to it 100 percent for very intentional reasons. There was nothing to negotiate about it since they understood its value in an evangelical mission movement. But today itineracy has taken on a different role. It is something that we do not understand, resent, and want to abolish. The letters in Open Forum make this clear. It is hard to find someone who totally affirms it. Why?

Over the last fifty years we have moved from an itineracy means of accomplishing our mission to a corporation model. Look at our vocabulary. At one time our buildings had a room called the “pastor’s study” and now it is the “pastor’s office.” At one time individuals served congregations as pastors, but today they are referred to as senior minister or staff. At one time we had “presiding elders” and today we have “district superintendents.” We are knee deep in the corporation model.

Is the itineracy model still of value for The United Methodist Church? If so, we will have to recapture a renewed perspective on our role and mission. In our context, “to reform the continent and spread scriptural holiness throughout the land” will be essential. We have committed ourselves not to reform and scriptural holiness, but to numerical growth and financial success. We will also have to restore a sense of community of covenant among the clergy, instead of vast plurality. Within the orders of elder and deacon and the fellowship of local pastors, it is simply painful for us to make a commitment of covenant due to our sense of competition with each other.

The question is not how to spell “itin-

eracy” but is it a model for reforming our society and spreading scriptural holiness in our land with a committed covenant community of “sent” clergy?

**Jack Albright**  
Jacksonville, TX

I am veteran of over forty years under appointment in The Methodist/United Methodist Church in three different annual conferences. I am still serving full-time under appointment. I could not agree more with the “Lyle Schaller Option” (July/August, pp. 38-40).

Time and again I have seen churches begin to blossom only to have their pastor appointed elsewhere and the positive growth and development that had begun to show true progress fall apart and the church be forced to start over.

I think the system by which pastors are moved frequently is a detriment to local churches, and it often has a very negative effect on pastors and their families. It is time to change the system. Perhaps the denomination should consider making appointments to a ten years service interval instead of on an annual basis. Yes, let us refer this to the Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table. I will be retired by the time the changes are made, but I strongly support a long hard look at iteration and solid research into its effectiveness.

**James M. Morgan**  
Clearwater, FL

As an Intentional Interim Ministerial Specialist (IIMS) I want to offer Nancy Richards (Missouri Conference) an answer to her question of “How long ‘til this issue is faced, any necessary legislation is passed, action taken, the need met?” for interims. (Open Forum,

July/August) I was among the first persons to take the intensive IIMS training at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina in 2002. The training included Conflict Resolution, a system approach to ministry and other valuable learning experiences. Using that training and practical experience gained over twenty-five years as a United Methodist Minister, with God's help I had two successful missions in stabilizing two churches that were in deep conflict and preparing them for a full-time minister. Although I am retired, I look forward to another challenge if and when I am asked to help again. I believe The United Methodist Church has taken steps to train and deploy specialists to meet this very real need.

**Tom Hughes**  
Florida Conference

I would like to thank "Circuit Rider" for dealing with the critical subject of itineracy in a recent issue. As an ordained elder under forty, I am one of those who has perhaps a different perspective on the topic than those who have served faithfully within the system for a longer period of time. Being a younger pastor does not automatically make one visionary—that characteristic is age-less. But those of us newer to the system might very well be beating the drum a bit more loudly when it comes to some adjustment of the system. A refreshing and reforming of itineracy so that it is more in line with contemporary needs doesn't automatically make one a congregationalist. It also doesn't automatically indicate laziness, ingratitude, or disloyalty to The United Methodist Church and/or life in ministry. It simply indicates a new way of seeing how we can be a healthier, thriving part of God's Church.

**Lisa Marchal**  
Columbus, Indiana

I have just finished reading through the most recent issue of "Circuit Rider" (July/August). I am deeply disappointed to find that the question of Christian Character as addressed by most of your authors continues to be seen as strictly a first person singular concern rather than a matter of concern for the unified community of Christ. The outstanding exception to this is the article by Rev. Javier Viera who speaks to the needs of the church in the twenty-first century as the other

authors do not. He speaks in a straight forward and simple manner of the need to reclaim the strength in unity that Christ preached and displayed to his followers and continues to represent, even through the fog of individualized religious understanding that has been weakening the church for far too long. Evidence of this need for community concern with God's justice for all of creation is also seen laced through the Sermon Starters offered by Rev. Christine Lee.

I read somewhere recently that the Trinity has come in our time to consist of "Me, Myself, and I." Unfortunately this is true. I believe that continuing to address Christianity as primarily a matter of the first person singular is perhaps the major force that is turning needing and hurting people away from Christ's Table by offering to share with them only stale bread crumbs and an empty cup. My thanks to Reverends Viera and Lee for making the reading of the current issue meaningful.

**Jim Gardner**  
Pennsylvania Delaware Conference

In the "bricolage" box on page 37 of the July/August 05 issue, there's a quote from Carl Jung that should be more accurately translated. Over the door of his house in Kusunacht, Jung inscribed the words "Vocatus atque non vocatus deus aderit." Rather than "seen," vocatus has the sense of being called, summoned, or bidden. I like the translation "Summoned or not summoned, God is present." The difference from the translation in CR is quite significant. (Originally, by the way, the quote comes from the oracle at Delphi.)

**Bob Whitfield**  
Milford, CT

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