



Empowering Churches for WorkLife Ministry
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Ministry leaders say office is new mission field

Local churches are being awakened to the need to train members to live out their faith in the rapidly changing marketplace

by Nancy A. Hudson

The workplace may well be the mission field of the 21st century. Dr. Peter Wagner of Global Harvest Ministries said, "The workplace movement has the potential to be as significant as the Protestant Reformation." The Rev. Billy Graham also expects to see a great move of God "through believers in the workplace."

To fulfill this mission, many feel it is necessary to mobilize every believing worker and dismantle the wall between sacred and secular work. Doug Spada, president and founder of His Church at Work, encourages churches to equip their members to fulfill their "God-given calling of work as ministry." His vision is for churches to anoint their members and then send them out to minister in the workplace just as they send foreign missionaries to other countries.

Author of "God is My CEO," Larry Julian, claims that workplace ministry can transform the Twin Cities for Jesus Christ. "The workplace is where people connect with what God is doing in the 'real' world," said Julian. He encourages people to partner with Christ during the workweek. The goal is for believers to live authentically and purposefully for Christ at work, just as Jesus' public ministry was in the marketplace and countryside, not the temple.

Many local churches have started offering training programs for congregation members to learn about ministering in the workplace.

Ginger Johnson, volunteer director of WorkLife Ministry at Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie, said, "All Christians are called to a relationship with Christ. Our secondary calling is expressing that relationship in our vocation."

"The Twin Cities is a national expression of what is happening and what can happen when believers accept the call to minister at work," said Johnson. "This is the only area in the country with more than one church actively participating in WorkLife Ministry."

Recognizing there are no sacred or secular activities, churches anoint and release their members to be ministers in the workplace. Johnson says the church emphasizes to its members that, "I am a minister of the Gospel," regardless of their occupation.

Geoff Bohleen, Outreach Pastor at Wooddale Church, is convinced that "no matter what your title, your work matters to God, and he will work through you to affect your workplace with his glory and love."

Wooddale initiated its WorkLife Ministry in February of 2003. Senior Pastor Leith Anderson said, "The majority of Christians spend the majority of their time at work, and work is also where Christians often have their most significant relationships with pre-Christians." If each person has contact with 20 people a week, Wooddale expects its workplace ministers to influence about 30,000 unchurched people weekly.

Hosanna! Church in Lakeville launched its WorkLife Ministry in January of 2005. Bill Farrell, director of WorkLife Ministry at Hosanna!, speaks with conviction about workplace ministry.

"All work is worship. We become stagnant if we are not living our faith," he said. "We represent Christ, wherever we are, and that is more than attending church on Sunday." Farrell, an engineer by trade, desires that every Christian would see his/her unique ability to communicate the love of Christ to co-workers, neighbors and clients.

Senior Pastor Bill Bohline invited "all who desired to come forward for a time of blessing and commissioning." They came forward by the hundreds, were anointed and sent out as ministers of Christ to their workplace. Bohline said, "It was powerful!" He added, "God desires that his church rise-up and use the good gifts it has been given to impact the culture for the kingdom," and WorkLife Ministry is one means by which this can happen.

Through the expanded outreach of WorkLife ministers throughout the Twin Cities, Hosanna! can potentially reach 27,000 unchurched people every week.

The newest church to initiate a WorkLife Ministry is North Heights Lutheran in Arden Hills. North Heights dedicated three weeks this June to promote WorkLife and to encourage their members to devote themselves to God and to their work.

Wayzata Free Church launched its WorkLife Ministries in February of this 2005. Mac Troost, a member of Wayzata Free and bank employee, is convinced that prayer is the foundation for a vital workplace ministry. He prays with a group at work weekly.

Farrell stressed that unity is a requirement for a successful workplace ministry. The focus is on friendship and a growing relationship with Christ which cuts across denominational lines and doctrine.

"The mission is to represent Jesus in your work life," he said. He notes that there is much brokenness and stress in the workplace. If Christians are actively looking for ways to bring Christ into their life at work, God will show them how to meet the needs of their co-workers, clients and neighbors.

The people involved in WorkLife Ministry are excited. They know that each believer who lives for Christ at work has the potential to change their city, state and country.

Henry Blackaby, author of "Experiencing God," said, "I believe in these critical days God is marshaling his people to share in the marketplaces of America. Many are looking to know if there is a God, and God has chosen to reveal himself through us. That is his strategy. If we believe him and release our lives to him, we can save our nation and the world will never be the same."

Farrell emphasized that this ministry is not just for the employer or business owner. It is an outreach for all believers, regardless of their occupation. Farrell knows this is true; he came to Christ through the ministry of other believers at work.

ACTION POINT

For more information on His Church at Work, visit www.hischurchatwork.org or call (404) 935-5757.

For information on WorkLife Ministry at Wooddale Church, visit www.wooddale.org.

For information on Worklife Ministry at Hosanna! Church in Lakeville, visit www.hosannalc.org.

For information on WorkLife Ministry at North Heights Lutheran Church, visit www.nhlc.org.