

FACT Case Studies of Congregations Engaging Young Adults
Life Center Foursquare Church, Spokane, Washington

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The 80,000 square foot Life Center Foursquare Church at 1202 N Government Way, Spokane, Washington, may seem more like a hotel on first entering. Its lobby includes a wall of windows, a coffee bar, and an area with enough space for kids to play games that are a part of their programs. It is affiliated with the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

The church's information brochure describes the goal as creating a living room setting. "We want you to feel at home and linger." The coffee bar provides complimentary coffee and tea with espresso drinks available for a donation for "mission activities at home and around the world." Unlike most churches, attendees are encouraged to take the drinks into the sanctuary to enjoy during the service. *The Spokesman-Review* reporter Kelly McBride wrote in a November 12, 1995, article that Life Center "goes through more Starbucks than a small diner." She also noted that "the congregation downs at least 600 cups during the traditional fellowship hour on Sunday mornings." Currently, the church budgets about \$800 a month for the warm beverage, but feels it is important to the relaxed atmosphere and fellowship.

In its 1800-seat sanctuary, Life Center has three Sunday services at 9 a.m., 11:15 a.m., and 5 p.m. The services are scheduled for one hour and 15 minutes. Children's programming for birth through 5th grade is offered during most service times with youth and young adult programs available on different days of the week. Life Center provides several levels of children's ministries: AdventureLand Kids, birth to age 5, Roots, age 6-8, and Mosaic, age 9-12.

The first service demographics are usually older. The second service is rather mixed age-wise while the evening service is much younger. Some would consider the praise portion of the service to be similar to a rock concert as a full band leads attendees through a variety of contemporary songs while baptisms, offerings, and prayer time takes place. Three screens enable everyone to see what is happening on the stage. Within minutes of the beginning of the service, a question is suggested for attendees to ask those around them, giving them the ice breaker needed to talk to someone new.

When prayer time comes, instead of someone leading prayer from the pulpit, attendees are given several minutes to reflect on a question from the worship coordinator that goes along with the service theme.

Rather than scheduling a service specifically for youth and young adults, this sort of service is intended to include any age. In addition, many in that age group assist with the service in areas of music, video, sound, or helping in the children's divisions.

Joe Wittwer is the lead pastor and preaches 90 to 95 percent of the time. David Lewellyn, Matt Clark, and Michael Hockett are also speaking pastors and team leaders, coordinating different aspects of the church. Life Center has a staff of more than 40 with countless volunteers assisting in a variety of ministries. Their church theme is "Loving God, Loving People." The service is offered in English and American Sign Language.

"Life Center is dedicated to helping people become whole-hearted followers of Christ," their website states. "By following Christ's example, we can make a difference in the lives of others and in our community."

Their goal is to reach 10 percent of Spokane County by 2020. Spokane's population in 2010 was 208,916. The average median age is 35. The estimated median household income in 2009 was \$38,939. Whites make up 84 percent of the population with Hispanics at 5 percent. Statistics show men and women in Spokane pretty equal with males at 48.8 percent and women at 51.2 percent. A March 2012 statistic put the cost of living index for Spokane at 92.9, less than the national average at 100. A look at ancestries found German to be the highest at 22.9 percent. Irish was next at 13.8 percent followed by English at 12.1 percent. For the population of 25 or older, 88.1 percent had a high school or higher degree. In Spokane 36.1 percent are affiliated with a religious congregation. The breakdown shows attendees for the Catholic Church at 39 percent, Presbyterian Church at 5 percent and other at 35 percent. (City-data.com)

History/Vision/Mission

According to official Web site of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, "The term 'Foursquare Gospel' came about during an intense revival in the city of Oakland, Calif., in July 1922. To a crowd of thousands, Aimee Semple McPherson explained Ezekiel's vision in the book of Ezekiel, chapter one. Ezekiel saw God revealed as a being with four different faces: a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle. To Sister McPherson, those four faces were like the four phases of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the face of the man, she saw Jesus our Savior. In the face of the lion, she saw Jesus the mighty Baptizer with the Holy Spirit and fire. In the face of the ox, she saw Jesus the Great Burden-Bearer, who took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses. In the face of the eagle, she saw Jesus the Coming King, who will return in power and victory for the church. It was a perfect, complete Gospel. It was a Gospel that faces squarely in every direction; it was the 'Foursquare Gospel.'"

As a Foursquare Church, the Life Center website states, "we believe Jesus Christ is God's Son, the Savior, Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, the Healer, and the coming King." Their mission is simply, "We think introducing our friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers to Jesus is really important, so we've set some guiding objectives and values to help us stay focused on what matters."

The objectives of Life Center include; (1) Love God with all we've got. (2) Win our neighbors to Jesus. (3) Grow to be all God wants us to be. (4) Send out agents of change into a broken world.

The web site also lists the following values of the congregation. **Prayer:** We pray first! **Relationships:** We believe that loving God and loving people sums up the Christian life. **Authenticity:** We are open, honest, and real. **Simplicity:** We stay centered on Jesus Christ and what He has called us to do. **Excellence:** We do our best for God. **Devotion:** We are wholehearted Christians. **Teamwork:** We value each person's gifts and participation. **Fun:** We enjoy following Jesus!

Life Center Foursquare Church began in Spokane in 1931 as a typical small, Pentecostal church. It remained that way for more than 40 years. Direct from Bible College, Joe Wittwer became lead pastor in May of 1978. "At that time, they gathered at a tiny building near the Spokane County Courthouse, in a church so small that it owned only six off-street parking spots," *The Spokesman-Review* reported on December 12, 2005.

Over the next couple of years attendance increased from roughly 10 or 12 people to more than 300. It was around this time, in 1983-84, that an official youth department began. The congregation had reached about 200 to 225.

"Enough youth attended that Don Crawford was hired to organize a youth group including junior high and high school students," Kafflen said. "College ministry was added a few years later on a volunteer basis and didn't become a paid staff position until moving to the Nora property in the 1990s."

When the Life Center purchased the new facility at 708 W. Nora, they "grew rapidly in numbers and in depth of ministry as staff expanded and teaching matured," stated Bill Kafflen, current assistant executive pastor.

"It's been a wild ride," said Wittwer, referring to the growth of his 1990-1995 weekend attendance from 300 people to 1,800. He was quoted in *The Spokesman-Review* article on Mega-Churches. Staff Writer Kelly McBride stated "What newcomers notice most about these churches is the lack of formality and ritual. Jeans are fine. So are shorts in the summer." And that is just how Life Center wants it, so people are comfortable to come in whatever they are wearing.

"As a generation, we have abandoned the spiritual moorings of our parents," Wittwer continued in *The Spokesman-Review* article. "Then we began having children and marrying and divorcing and facing life as it really is, and there has been an awakening. But that awakening is among a generation that is still fairly anti-institutional. They do not adapt well to traditional churches." A new Gallup survey confirms that statement with only 44 percent expressing confidence in organized religion, down from 68 percent in 1975.

In 2005 Life Center moved to its current location. That move ignited yet another growth spurt and created a "deeper spirituality," Kafflen stated. The church has no formal membership but estimates that 7,000 to 8,000 people in the Spokane area would

consider Life Center their church. Sunday service attendance has grown from 3,372 in May 2008 to 4,128 in May 2010, and in May 2012 is at 4,076.

Easter Service

With such a large attendance, church administration had to figure out a way to accommodate the large group that would want to attend an Easter Service and saw renting the Spokane Arena as a way to create a community outreach as well. "Easter is one of those times when people who aren't necessarily members of our congregation will say 'yes' to an invitation, and that's why we do this," Wittner is quoted in an April 17, 2006, article in *The Spokesman-Review*. (Morlin)

In 1996 "5,200 people celebrated Easter in the Spokane Arena," wrote Jamie Tobias Neely in *The Spokesman-Review* article. "It's an opportunity to reach out to the unchurched who aren't in another church," Kafflen stated in the article. "Hopefully, some folks will leave and have a relationship with the Lord." Costs, he estimated, were between \$10,000 and \$15,000. Neely stated that "the stage was filled with people under 40." During the service she stated that Wittwer "urged the congregation to seek an extraordinary life through Jesus Christ ... 'Life is not about money or power or possessions or self,' he said. 'Your relationships with God and with people are the real riches of life.'"

When *The Spokesman-Review* featured Life Center's 2006 Easter service they estimated that the 7,000-person congregation was "probably the biggest audience in the 10 years Life Center Foursquare Church has been renting the city-owned facility for Easter services," as staff writer Bill Morlin stated in the article. "I've had a lot of people tell me our Easter service was their first church service," Wittwer shared with Morlin for the article. Morlin also mentioned Wittwer led the service "in a Hawaiian print shirt and Dockers slacks."

"Easter is an annual reminder to us that God always has the last word," Wittwer shared in his Easter message. "It's so good to know we're in the Master's hands."

Twenty-five Life Center volunteers started at 2 a.m. Sunday to create a "closed-circuit television system with cameras and a high-tech sound system," Morlin reported.

In 2008 organizers moved the services back to their church location and offered five services for Easter and Christmas. "With expenses increasing to almost \$30,000, it made more fiscal sense to move back," Kafflen stated. The church had all the technology in place so now they budget about \$11,000 and many times don't even spend that much. The 2012 Easter service had 8,454 adults and 1,440 children participate in the services.

Life Groups

Getting connected is an important part of their success. “We really have to work hard at maintaining that sense of community,” Wittwer said in *The Spokesman-Review*. (McBride) “You find people shopping for churches based on a personal checklist,” Wittwer stated in an article printed the same year by *The Spokesman-Review* on Mega-Churches. “When in fact there’s a reciprocity in a biblical community. It’s not enough to be a taker. You have to be a giver, too. And not just money.”

That philosophy is what started the Life Center Life Groups. “A Life Group,” their information brochure explains, “is comprised of three or more people who meet together regularly for friendship and spiritual growth in Christ. They provide an excellent way to live out our mission and the commands Christ gives us in Matthew 27:37-39—love God and love people.”

“Life Groups are designed for connection through shared interest, similar life stages, and the opportunity to build friendships,” the brochure stated. “Volunteering in a ministry will also help you connect, and is a great way to meet people, and discover more of how God has gifted you.”

The church offers a daily reading guide each quarter enabling everyone, including the Life Groups, to have a scripture to focus on. The church staff encourages the SOAP approach. **Scripture:** Read the Bible. **Observation:** What does it mean? **Application:** What does it mean to me? **Prayer:** Pray it back to God.

With more than 200 Life Groups to choose from, meeting in various area locations, attendees are bound to find something that fits their circumstances. The goal is to keep groups small and relaxed, so once a group has a good number of people coming regularly it will “close” so as to not to get too big. For college-age attendees there were at the time of this writing three Life Groups listed that were currently open for new members: a Women’s Bible Study, a Girlfriends in God Luncheon/Bible Study, and a Topical Bible Study.

“Moving to emphasize small group settings for the sake of relationship and discipleship has been the most significant change in recent history,” Kafflen stated. “Change was made to invigorate personal growth for the participants and young adult ministry as a whole. It has been very successful and therefore we maintain it. The Life Groups have grown from 15 percent to 80 percent in the past five years.” All church staff and Life Group leaders are trained and vetted with background checks both locally and nationally.

Pam Craig coordinates one of the college Life Groups. She will readily admit this was not her choice. She felt the Lord calling her to help. When she told Bobby Moore, Life Center college pastor, that she was willing to help where needed, he encouraged her to be a mentor for a Life Group. So she gave up one of the three Life Groups she was attending and started a college-age women’s Bible study.

“We started meeting at the church, then at one of the girls’ house,” Craig shared. “Now we meet in my home. I prepare and serve a meal for the girls, sometimes just salad and healthy snacks. Until I started meeting in my home the group was never larger than three.” Now the group averages six or seven, but has been up to 12.

“There have been times when only one showed in these past seven years,” Craig admits. “At first I can't pretend that it didn't bother me, but then I learned that the Lord has a plan for me to have exclusive time with the one. Those have been some of the most fruitful meetings for me and them!”

She has learned that a formal approach of study has not worked. “These young women need the support of each other, prayer and encouragement in their daily walks and the structure just becomes a burden,” She has found keeping it casual, supportive, and open to sharing what we are going through in life while focusing on growing closer to the Lord, following the leading of the Holy Spirit, and praying for each other is the best formula for the group. “I still take lessons from discipleship classes, but it is in sound bites sandwiched between a fresh garden salad, (most are starved for fresh home cooked food), and prayers for jobs, schools, family, and relationships.”

Texting is the number one way of communication with the group, including prayer requests during the week. Facebook is number two. The students average about 1.5 years in her Life Group as they move, get married, graduate, start careers, or go back home. Many have stayed in contact though. Since then, she has helped coordinate a Life Group for college-aged women struggling with sexual pasts. She encourages others to start college-age Life Groups “as long as it is HIS idea and you love the age group.”

Mike Beacham coordinates a college-age topical Bible study Life Group that started almost two years before this writing. Enjoying the different Bible stories from the Life Group he was attending, he didn't want the study to end just because leadership changed or life happened. He went through the Life Center training classes and started his own Life Group. Since then, they have studied different books of the Bible, different topical studies such as love, faith, and trust, and world religion units.

“When the group was struggling the most is when we were trying to push certain ideas the hardest, or get the group to go in a direction that people weren't ready to go,” Beacham shared. “Especially with younger people, everyone is at a different level of understanding, and you can't work on too high of a level or too low of a level, but really shift between the two. If people aren't able to relate to what you're saying to them, they don't follow along and that removes their level of interest in the group.”

Beacham prefers to engage the individuals and challenge them to think about their answers. “Currently, our group's method of engaging people is each week someone different is presenting on a religion. Our hope is to help everyone get a little more comfortable talking about faith in an open setting where they are doing the leading of

the conversation, and also to make everyone feel a little more aware of the differences between ourselves and those of other 'faiths.'"

"The thing I've noticed while having a small group is that almost anyone will come to a Bible study, and they'll probably listen. The hard thing is to get them to ask the questions they're afraid to ask, and even harder still is to answer them without driving them away. With new people, it's hard to gauge where they are in their faith, and without a decent amount of chatting outside of a once-a-week, hour(ish)-long meeting, you'll be hard pressed to figure out where they really are, and what the hiccups they are experiencing really are. Those hiccups are what keep people from coming back, because they don't understand one thing, so they feel like they can't get any of it, and therefore none of it must be valid." Beacham's group averages seven to eight people each week.

LouAnn Hommel felt "a strong urging from God" to start a group on the Eastern Washington University campus where she works. She found several Christian staff members and started the group to pray for those who had lost their job due to university "cut-backs." They started meeting twice a month, every first and third Wednesday at noon for an hour.

"We started as a prayer group, but very soon changed to a study group," she shared. "In the beginning, we decided on a topic and everyone studied the topic on their own and brought it back to the group." They did that for about six months then someone recommended they study a book together. They have studied books ever since. "I didn't start the group with any pre-conceived ideas. I was just trying to obey God's prompting. So I've been completely open to letting the group morph."

They do not have the same people show up every time. "Just when I think hardly anyone will be there I am surprised to find a nice-size group of attendees that haven't come in awhile. I am very transparent and have no problem sharing my own personal struggles. As a result, everyone feels free to share. The discussions are lively and engaging. Everyone talks and shares which I love."

She used to accommodate people's schedules, but found that did not work as it always left some people out. She has stuck with the same day and time and enjoys whoever comes. Her highest number of people has been 15, but they average six to eight at a time. For those thinking of starting a small group, she shared, "Don't wait until you think you know enough. If you believe God is prompting you to do it ... do it. He'll work it out."

Young Adult Ministries

ALIVE is a ministry specifically for those 18-25 years of age. They meet every Thursday at 7 p.m. in the church multi-purpose room for a night of worship and teaching in a large group setting. Food is served every time. In the summer, organizers like to barbecue to give the backyard feel for this group. Other times it might be pizza or hot dogs. The college-age students gather and mingle until the band begins. This signals the

beginning of the 30-40 minute program filled with contemporary music performed by a full band followed by a speaker. The program always ends with some type of interaction or commitment, a way to respond to what has been said. Occasionally it will be a traditional "alter call," but it could be simply a song of encouragement. The energy in the group is very positive and most leave energized and encouraged for the upcoming week. No offering is taken, as expenses are covered by the church budget.

ALIVE has been meeting since 2007. It started out with about 60 people and has seen steady growth, mostly through word of mouth. They don't advertise but encourage promotion as exemplified by the story of Jesus' disciple, Andrew, calling his brother, Simon: **Find** someone, **Tell** them about the program, and **Bring** them. The current attendance ranges from 120-180, stated Josh Schiel, student ministries Life Groups pastor.

Schiel is also involved in Soul Punch videos created for the specific purpose of making people laugh. "As Christians, we take our faith seriously; in fact we cannot take it too seriously," the website states. "It's when we start taking ourselves too seriously that we get into trouble. And sometimes you just gotta laugh. And sometimes it's at yourself." Schiel explained that the videos are not meant to be disrespectful. "Jesus is fun and we need to celebrate that." Soul Punch videos can be found on the church website or on their You Tube Channel, "Soul Punch Productions." The videos are produced at random times, with whatever they feel like presenting.

David Lewellyn, Life Center student ministries team leader, stated their practical philosophy is "to help every college-age person in the Spokane area become a whole-hearted, passionate follower of Jesus who will positively impact his/her family, school, church, community, and world now and in the future."

"As young people mature and decisions are made we raise the bar and show them how they can change the world and be empowered by the word of God," Schiel said. Peer leadership is a strong component of the program, as a peer can influence someone more positively than an older person might be able to.

Even though the ALIVE program had not yet officially begun, a June 29, 1995, post by *The Spokesman-Review* announced a picnic sponsored by Life Center for single college students and twentysomethings after its 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Sunday services. That showed interest in that age group long before the programs were formalized.

On February 1, 2010, Life Center ALIVE joined the Facebook craze to promote their events and post photos and videos. The page is geared for the targeted age group and speaks in a language that age group would find entertaining. The diversity of its "Friends" shows that the program appeals to all types of people. At the time of this writing, the page had 532 "Friends. It can be found at "LifeCenter Alive." They also use twitter to promote events and updates.

The young adult ministry staff consists of David Lewellyn, Life Center student ministries team leader, Bobby Moore, Life Center college pastor (Moore is the only full-time person; the rest of the staff divide their time between other age groups), Josh Schiel, Life Center student ministries Life Groups pastor, and Emily Lewellyn, Life Center student ministries support.

When asked if there are any challenges, Lewellyn mentions the difficulty in retaining new believers. “We may not always know why they leave and wish there was something we could do to help but they don’t always feel comfortable letting us know they are struggling with something.”

College Housing

“College house is an awesome opportunity to grow with God and others in fellowship and community,” the College Housing website states. “These homes have anywhere from four to eight roommates and are hubs for ALIVE events, Bible studies, and more. ... The college houses provide an organic culture of meeting people and growing together in faith through reading the Bible, praying, serving, and giving, and then sharing with others,” said Lewellyn. Emphasis is placed on excellence in our services (good worship and teaching). Life Center has “six college houses, with one more coming soon, of students who serve, lead, and live in the community with accountability to Godly lives,” stated Kafflen.

The houses are owned by individuals and rented to the students. “The church does not deal with any of the financial matters. The lease is between the owner and the student,” Lewellyn stated. The church simply helps fill the houses with college-age students looking for a positive environment. There is no alcohol allowed on the premises and the houses are used for many Life Groups, parties, and other young adult events. Even though there is an application available on the church website, Lewellyn said that they are mainly filled by word of mouth. The current houses are called The PAD, The Walton House, Woodside, The Shack, The Ardmore House and The Nook.

Leaders say that college housing has been a huge tool in the discipleship of many. While it is not as formal as a ministry institute or discipleship program, simply living in community together and having weekly house meetings has been very beneficial for many individuals, and therefore, the ministry. The lives of some troubled young people have been transformed by living in a Life Center college house. Lewellyn said they have had to evict people, but only after many, many opportunities have been given to improve.

The houses also host Bible studies, worship nights, barbecues, and parties. Many have had their first encounter with the college ministry at an event such as these. “The discipleship and evangelism aspects of the houses are invaluable to our ministry,” said Lewellyn. “Also, the involvement of many college-aged individuals leading in the junior high and senior high programs bolsters the overall involvement in the college community.”

Church Plants

Life Center thrives on starting church plants. They feel it is one of the most effective ways to introduce people to a relationship with Christ. They've encouraged 200-600 people from Life Center to become members of church plants in different areas of Spokane. Experienced Life Center staff goes with the members to support the plant. "They know our DNA," Kafflen stated, "so it makes it easier to reproduce what we know works."

Several of the churches started by Life Center include Eastpoint, Garland, Life Center North, Liferoads, Summit Ridge, and West Central. Eastpoint and Garland are not part of the foursquare church but have chosen to be independent organizations. West Central is not technically a church yet as they need 35 people to sign a charter to become a church. Mosiac is a church Life Center helped start. Wittwer meets with all pastors quarterly to discuss common goals and challenges. It is interesting to note that they don't meet in a typical church setting and several focus specifically on college-age and young adults. Below are brief histories of several of these churches.

Eastpoint: "Eastpoint Church is a non-denominational daughter church of Life Center in Spokane, WA. We held our first services in January of 2003. The actual beginning was with a core group of about 90 people who started to meet in October of 2002. Eastpoint experienced explosive growth in our first year and quickly outgrew our initial facility on Argonne. After searching and looking at many different options in the valley, we finally leased 35,000 square feet of the old K-Mart building at the corner of Sullivan and Sprague, which is where we are today. The facility has been ideal for the growth that God has given us and now accommodates nearly 1200 people on the weekends."

Life Center North: "Life Center North Foursquare Church was planted in 1999 as a small group from Life Center. After meeting in homes for a few months, God opened up the door for us to meet at Northwood Middle School and 500 people showed up on our first Sunday. God has been awesome, stretching us and growing us into what is now a church of over 1200 people meeting in four services. It is obvious to all of us that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves and the Holy Spirit is at work. Literally hundreds of people have come into a relationship with Jesus Christ, been baptized and are now following the Savior. Our church is called to play an important part in restoring broken lives. In 2005 we started Serve Spokane, a non-profit organization whose mission is to serve and love hurting people throughout Spokane with food, clothing, shelter, addiction recovery and support for people with special needs. Life Center North has a huge heart for the global harvest; we are supporting church planters, building wells, fighting malaria, and planting churches in Africa, Nepal, and other countries. We have always been a train and equip kind of church: we founded the Spokane Ministry Institute where we disciple believers, develop leaders, raise up pastors and help plant churches. We have seen graduates of our program launch churches inter-denominationally. Both Serve Spokane and Spokane Ministry Institute are city wide and inter-denominational in their approach. God has called us as a resource church to build

up the body of Christ in Spokane and around the world. Recently we launched Catalyst, a credentialed Bible training program for 18-24 year olds which is an immersion discipleship residential program. Life Center North is a spiritually passionate environment made up of people from all walks of life who come together to get real, experience God, have fun, and be changed more and more into the image of Jesus Christ.

“For the past 8 years we have been leasing an old theatre and this has worked great for us. The owner has terminated our lease and he will be demolishing the building in order to develop his land. We have one year to relocate yet we know God is in control. We want to continue reaching out to the hurting world around us with the good news of Jesus Christ. So with that in mind, we began the capital campaign to raise funds to purchase a facility. At the same time, doors opened and doors closed as God clearly pointed the way to the Division Street property. Our goal of \$2 million was not raised, but what we did raise will provide an operating facility sufficient for our current needs.”

Liferoads: “Life Center Foursquare Church began planting daughter churches in Spokane County in 1997. In the fall of 2000, Joe Wittwer, the pastor of Life Center, contacted Brad and Cheri Williams in Phoenix, Arizona, regarding the possibility of planting a church in Spokane. After ten months of prayer and consideration, the Williams family moved to Spokane. Brad participated for twelve months on the staff at Life Center working in singles ministry and as one of the teaching pastors.

“In late spring of 2002, the birth of a new daughter church was announced, and the development of the Liferoads core team began. Liferoads Church officially began in September of 2002. For the first eight months, Liferoads met in the gym of Longfellow Elementary School. “After those grueling months of being a portable church, setting up and tearing down each week, God provided a phenomenal facility, the former Eastside Cinema. Seating over four hundred with rooms for children’s and adult classes, this building has been an amazing blessing from the spring of 2003 to the present.

“In the summer of 2005, Brad and Cheri Williams accepted a call to move to New York City to begin a work planting churches in the city. Grant Opland became the pastor in August 2005 and served wholeheartedly until God called him to other things in January 2009. Grant – along with his wife and kids – were a part of the core team of people who helped start Liferoads. His son Matthew has been the worship pastor since the beginning of Liferoads and he continues to serve today at Liferoads with his wife, Kristin.

“In February of 2009, Donnie Johnson became the pastor of Liferoads Church. Donnie and his wife, Pam, were also a part of the core team that founded Liferoads in 2002. Formerly, Donnie spent two years as the children’s pastor and two years as the associate pastor at Liferoads as well as 18 months as the associate pastor at Liferoads’ sister church, Mirabeau Chapel in Spokane Valley.”

Mosaic Fellowship: “The church hopes to reach the 18 to 35 age group. ‘They seem to be leaving and staying away from church in droves,’ said Rev. John Repsold, start-up pastor for Mosaic Fellowship. The unusual venue may be a big draw. The church meets on Sunday mornings at Interplayers Theatre.”

“The name chosen for this new congregation has special meaning. A mosaic is a work of art made from small bits of ceramic or glass. Repsold said that’s what they’re all about. ‘The idea of brokenness, of broken pieces of different colors, being put together by a master artist to make something beautiful.’” Their Web site stated “We’re located downtown because we want to experience the heart of God in the heart of our city - where we live, work and play in Spokane.”

“At Mosaic we try to connect people together in relationships that allow various groups to enjoy each other’s friendship while connecting us together as a multi-generational family. Twice a month (one Saturday afternoon and the third Friday evening of the month) Mosaic’s young adults gather in different family homes or meet at Second Space Gallery to experience serving some segment of our city together.”

Summit Ridge: “One could say that the new Summit Ridge Foursquare Church is opening its doors this weekend, if it had any doors to call its own. “Instead, the new church will meet for now in the Seventh-day Adventist Church at 5607 S. Freya. “While a lot of work remains for Summit Ridge, including finding a permanent site, the church is starting with 300 members and several programs for adults and kids.

“Summit Ridge was formed by Life Center, a church with more than 2,000 members on the North Side. The Rev. Joe Woodruff, hired by Life Center last fall to get the new church up and running, will be pastor. “This is Woodruff’s third church planting, and he said it is a ministry he enjoys. A church planting, sometimes called birthing a new church, occurs when some members of a church branch off and form a new church to serve a different area.

“Church planting is the most effective way of reaching people and meeting their needs, said Woodruff, and it allows him to plan the church according to the needs of the community and build it from the ground up. ‘I spent three months just getting a sense of the community,’ he said. He began by forming Kids Universe, a children’s ministry. It includes a church for kids with puppets and animated storytelling. He also plans a tutoring program during the week. It eventually will be expanded to offer children help in numerous subjects from drama to computers. ‘The possibilities are endless,’ said Woodruff. He’s also planning a women’s ministry and a music program.

“Woodruff, 34, got his start in ministry at age 16 when he was invited to speak at a youth service. As a result, his older brother was converted to Christianity, and Woodruff decided to make preaching his future. ‘For me, preaching and pastoring has been my opportunity to make a difference,’ he said.” They are still renting that facility.

Final Thoughts

Under the title “There is more than one right way to do church!” Justin Bryeans visited three Mega-Churches for LDR--“Leadership Development Resources LLC.” LDR was formed out of a commitment to a biblically-based, Christ-centered mission to develop leaders and empower churches. Of the three churches Bryeans visited, two were in Post Falls, Idaho, and the third was Life Center in Spokane. Here is what he wrote “This Four Square church uses the seven-day-a-week (Christian Center) approach. . . It has very full programming throughout the week with something for everyone. The service was contemporary traditional with a great deal of production and media. It was not a simple church style. They were also working through a book of the Bible in their messages for the summer.”

Organic is a word that kept coming up when discussing the Life Center young adult programs. If something isn’t working, they change it. They don’t seem to have any formal survey data, program evaluation, or focus groups; they just pray a lot and let the Spirit guide them.

They accept people where they are. They don’t try to change them. Relationship is a key component to the success of the church and relationship can only come through interaction. Peer leadership is important. Sometimes the college-age students volunteer. Other times church leaders seek out individuals they see with leadership potential and then empower them and train them to lead.

The key findings from Life Center Foursquare Church and its young adult ministry might be summarized as follows:

Food: They have found this to be an important factor as it creates an easy atmosphere for students to get their other student friends to come to a function.

Music: Most young people want uplifting, powerful, and positive contemporary music to listen to and sing along with, and a full band to energize.

Bible-based: People, especially young people, prefer speakers to share the Bible in stories and in ways that they can apply to their life. Application is key. If they don’t know what it has to do with them, they won’t know how to adapt it to their life.

Involvement: Everyone likes to be involved. With different temperaments, there would be different types of involvement. Ministries can empower young people to help, beginning where they are comfortable. Having a part in something enables people to feel included, not just a spectator.

The Arts: This successful ministry embraces the arts. Videos, photography, art, drama, and other arts are included in their programming.

Connection: They use Twitter, Facebook, etc., to keep in touch with the young people in ways that are comfortable to them.

Acceptance: Successful ministries embrace Matthew 7:1 “Do not judge.” They encourage others in their walk with the Lord wherever that may be and seek not to be a stumbling block for them.

Love them: This age group faces many challenges of schedules, relationships, career decisions, and more. They just want to know someone genuinely cares.

Life Center credits a lot of their success to their Life Groups, which are small groups that any size church can emulate.

Tamara Michalenko Terry is a freelance writer with a passion to see young people involved in church ministries and excited about something greater than themselves. She has a degree in public relations and broadcast journalism and has written for a variety of clients for the past 20 years.

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