

ABSTRACT

Diagnosis, Dialogue, and Decision: A Threefold Process of Revitalization For the Illinois Great Rivers Conference

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In 2004, I was one of six certified consultants working with the Office of Congregational Development of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, a judicatory unit tasked with the responsibility of responding within the twelve months to over 120 requests for consulting in church growth and revitalization with individual churches. The large number of requests threatened to overwhelm the capacity of these part-time consultants to respond in a timely and effective manner. In order to meet this need, this study guide has been developed as a seminar-based Self-Study Process for church growth and revitalization combining my research as a Doctor of Ministry student at Fuller Seminary with the policies of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference and its Office of Congregational Development. Seminars can absorb large numbers of participant churches and allow every church to receive some consulting support.

The first seminar, *Diagnosis*, will help churches understand their situations compared to the principles which guide the largest and fastest growing churches in the world, and particularly the discipleship system of the Yoido Full Gospel Church of Seoul, Korea. Grace, whether prevenient, justifying, or sanctifying, is a process of change; therefore, grace and the gospel are always extraordinary, entering systems as foreign influences contrary to the status quo. The second seminar, *Dialogue*, will blend insights from Peter Senge, Everett Rogers, and Geoffrey Moore in order to help churches understand how to overcome systemic resistance to change, including systemic resistance to the gospel, to grace and to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The third seminar, *Decision*, will offer examples of tools that make disciples and disciple makers and which integrate and apply the principles taught in the previous two seminars. The entire project will function as a gentle antithesis to homeostasis in order to provoke multiple conversations that lead to the adoption of disciple making innovations.

The seminars will incorporate the vision, mission and goals of our conference leadership and the Office of Congregational Development. This will facilitate outcomes congruent with these criteria and prepare pastors and participating churches for long-term cooperation with the Office of Congregational Development.

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