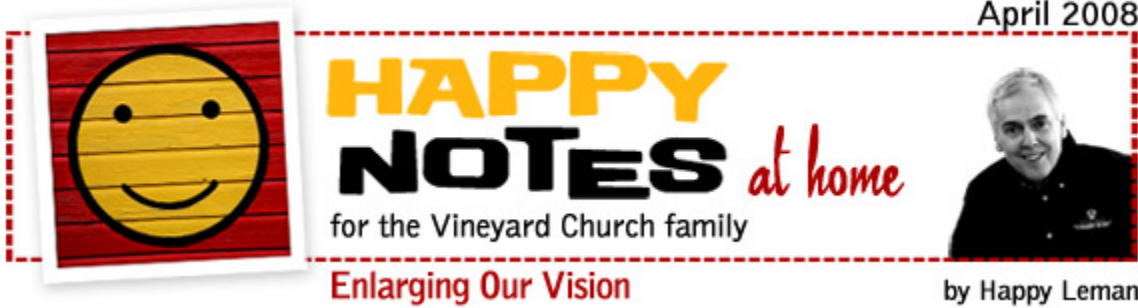


April 2008



Last Month

In my communication last month, I spoke about the need for larger facilities here on this campus. Your feedback was insightful, encouraging, and helpful as we think through these issues. Without question we must increase our base of operations as there are so many people in East-Central Illinois yet to be gathered into the family of Jesus Christ.

Survey Result

One thing the recent church survey showed was that people attending from a distance are less likely to be deeply involved in the church. While they deeply love the church, those who are 30 minutes or more away find that they are able to participate less in various activities. Further, this group of people has a much harder time inviting their friends into this Christian community. (Next month, I hope to write some other findings in the survey.)

Solution - Start New Churches

We've always been into planting churches. In the past, however, we basically planted them far away. These are called church plants and have been common over our 30 year history.

The newer type of church is referred to as a satellite church. These churches are normally planted within 1 hour and remain a part of the larger planting church. This is a growing trend that is happening throughout the country at this time.

Satellite Churches Explained

These churches are much like the main church from which they are sent. In fact the pastors, support staff, finances, and administration are all part of the sending church. One of these pastors will be assigned full time to the satellite location. This individual will then proceed by building programs and ministries within that church. In essence, everything is the same at the satellite church as it would be in a church plant except for the message on the weekend service. In general, this is a video of the service from the speakers at the main church.

The advantage of satellites is that they are located in the outlying communities throughout East-Central Illinois. The people of those communities are then able to bring their friends and participate in activities during the week. Many more of them can also be involved in leadership and using their spiritual gifts.

In general, we are not building satellite churches to ask people from the more distant communities to begin attending there. In fact, most people currently attending the main church in Urbana will be expected to continue doing so. Each satellite church will develop a

team of 10-20 core people from that community who actually begin to attend, work, and lead in the new endeavor. Their main goal is to attract the unchurched of that community - not simply redirect the ones who are attending the main church.

Satellite churches have several advantages:

We are able to put churches closer to where people live - more can attend more easily.

We provide more opportunities for people to serve - vital in growing disciples.

We foster Kingdom expansion more quickly.

We gather more disciples into the community and help them mature as they begin to take ownership in the new location.

Final Thoughts

You will be hearing much about satellite churches in the next 10 years. Our goal is to plant 10 of these throughout East-Central Illinois. We are always looking for men and women who want to be involved in some significant way. Remember there's plenty to do for everyone who is called. We will find a role that each of you can play if you are willing to commit to such an endeavor. Please be in prayer that the satellite churches are prosperous.

Just so that there's no confusion, we will still be planting regular churches. Our goal is to plant 8-10 more of these in the next 10 years as well. Generally these will be sent more than an hour away and will be self-supporting churches from day one.

We also plan to expand our facilities here. Usually when a group is sent to plant a new church (regardless of the type) their place is quickly taken by newcomers. We assume that will happen and we'll need still more facilities on this location. Keep praying about all these opportunities. Thanks for being friends and partners.

*Happy Notes at Home are a monthly reflection of community life at The Vineyard Church
and are produced by Happy Leman.*