



*The Church List for the Rest of Us*

2013 • ISSUE #4

THE COVE • WORDSERVE

LAKEPOINTE • HARVEST CHRISTIAN

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## The Story Behind the List

We all love great stories. And if you are a church leader, you especially love fresh stories of our Savior-King, Jesus.

A few years ago, I began to grow weary of church success stories that were exclusively about worship attendance. Don't get me wrong—we celebrate, as readily as anyone, the work of God that explodes with numeric fruit. But we all know that Jesus is moving in ways less visible—or should I say, less platformed—across North America.

So the Auxano team decided to create “a list for the rest of us.” We want to salute the hard work of creative and faithful visionaries that will never make the “100 largest” or “fastest growing” list. We want to inspire worship of Jesus, the chief visionary and kingdom entrepreneur whose follower-leaders are taking small towns and niche communities by storm. We want to

stoke vibrant imagination in every pastor and see new models emerge where photocopied strategies have kept us stuck.

We hope you enjoy the fourth release of the Unique 19. Every year we will highlight the 19 churches we have selected for that year. Month by month we will give a peak under the hood a few at a time—different sizes, distinct locales, and various faith tribes. What unique vision has God given to these pastors? What bold values and emerging strategies have come to life? How are leaders redefining the scorecard of business-as-usual church?

May these stories stretch your mind and strengthen your heart.

– Will Mancini

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The Unique 19 is a resource brought to you by Auxano, a vision clarity consulting group founded by Will Mancini, the author of Church Unique. Auxano is committed to helping local churches become local movements by guiding them to discover and live out a unique mission.

**Chapelwood UMC, Houston, TX**

*A Grace-soaked culture leads to Grace-soaked lives*

**Revolution 216, Cleveland, OH**

*The hip hop church where misfits fit*

**Meadow Heights, MO**

*An unstoppable force in an improbable place*

**Flood Church, San Diego, CA**

*Reaching an unreached generation*

**Northwest Bible Church, Dallas, TX**

*Where it's OK not to be fine*

**Mosaic Church, Little Rock, AR**

*Pursuing unity to create real community transformation*

**Redemption Church, Tempe, AZ**

*We can accomplish more together than we can apart*

**360 Church, Sarasota, FL**

*Building a courageous church with a 1-to-1 relational mindset*

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Newport Beach, CA**

*Redefining the Good Life*

**Renovatus, Charlotte, NC**

*A church of people under renovation - liars, dreamers, and misfits*

**Scum of the Earth, Denver, CO**

*A church for the right-brained and left out*

**Trinity Grace, NY, NY**

*Joining God with the renewal of the city*

**● The Cove, Mooresville, NC**

*1000 Neighborhood Campuses in Race City, USA*

**● WordServe, Fulshear, TX**

*Typical Suburb, Totally New Scorecard*

**● LakePointe Church, Little Rock, AR**

*Making it harder to go to hell in Hot Springs*

**● Harvest Christian Fellowship, Plainview, TX**

*After the father's heart amid the independence of west Texas*

**New City Church, Los Angeles, CA**

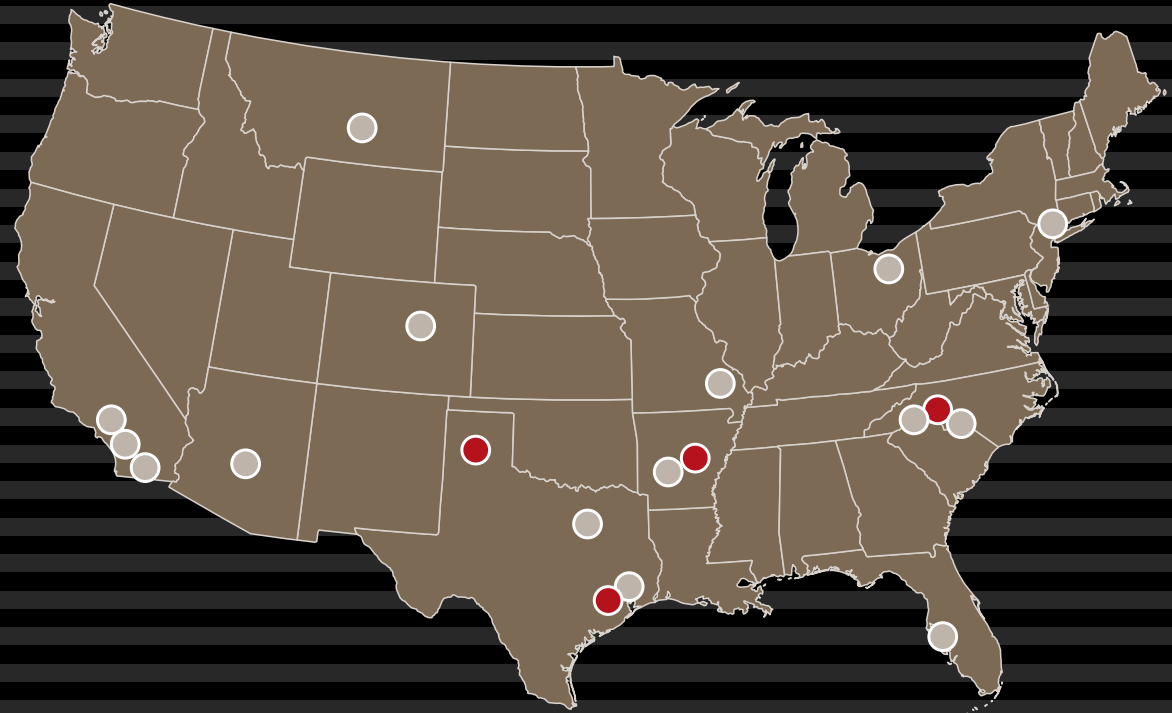
*Bringing together the forgotten and the fortunate across Los Angeles*

**Good Shepherd UMC, Charlotte, NC**

*Deweirding the Holy Spirit*

**Harvest Church, Billings, MT**

*Living the Way of Jesus, Out of the Way*



# THE COVE CHURCH

MOORSEVILLE, NC



**THE COVE**  
1000 NEIGHBORHOOD CAMPUSES IN RACE CITY, USA

The church service started about twenty minutes ago. The band just walked off the stage. Walking onto the stage is ... no one. It's time for the message, but rather than a sermon there is only awkward silence. The pastor didn't show up.

Why?

## THE COVE



*Weekly Services. Quiet Time.  
Life Groups. Serving.*

### **Turns out he's in the bathroom. He didn't realize what time it was and missed his cue.**

What kind of church is that? The old church on the corner with the numbers "72" and "\$484.37" displayed under "Last Week's Attendance" and "Last Week's Offering" on the board up front next to the dry baptistery? You know that church, the one with the musty smelling sanctuary and the preacher who is on the other side of retirement.

No, this is The Cove, one of the biggest churches you've never heard about. Only 15 years old, with over 5,000 people attending 5 sites each weekend, and committed to realthentic ministry. No, that's not a typo. You've heard of authentic. The Cove has taken it a step further. In their words, they are all about being realthentic. Push them on it, tell them they can't describe their church with a made up word, and they'll concede, "Fine, then we're rawthentic."

The Cove started with four people, Lead Pastor Mike Madding and his family. Mike remembers standing at the window on a Sunday morning at a parking lot, wondering if anyone would show up. Finally, after their grand opening with about 180 people, the church settled down to about 90 people. There's never been anything flashy about The Cove. And they like it that way.

At a recent meeting, hundreds of The Cove's leaders packed the room ready to be inspired and to increase their passion for God and the church. From the front, The Cove's values were being shared, verbatim, from memory. After the sixth and final value was spoken, the crowd went wild. And the person sharing them? Not Mike Madding. Not a staff member. No, it was a high school student. A teenager given the role of motivator for the church's leaders? Yep. That's The Cove.

The Cove has not built a cult of personality. In fact, if you read the church's staff page, Mike Madding is listed fifth. Mike doesn't have a blog. He does do Twitter, but with a low-key, informal feel.

Instead of a cult of personality, The Cove has been built on vision clarity. They are passionate about their mission: At The Cove Church, we will introduce our friends to Jesus, learn to follow Him and celebrate His presence in our lives. And their "four legged stool" strategy: Weekly Services. Quiet Time. Life Groups. Serving.

**We love God passionately. We love people unconditionally. We take the Bible seriously. We stay united. We are generous. We keep it real. All of it is simple, and intentionally so.**

And their values: We love God passionately. We love people unconditionally. We take the Bible seriously. We stay united. We are generous. We keep it real. All of it is simple, and intentionally so. It's what allows them to talk about it all the time, to get it into the blood of their people and tattoo it on their brains. It's what allows a surprised teenager to be called up on stage and passionately share the values off the top of her head. And it's what has allowed The Cove to do tremendous ministry and see lives be dramatically changed at their campuses all around the Lake Norman area, north of Charlotte, North Carolina.

And, by the way, when Mike finally got out of the bathroom his explanation was that he was late getting on stage because he was ... in the bathroom. And he told everyone that not only because it was the truth, but also because it was, well, realthentic.





WORDserve  
CHURCH

## WORDSERVE CHURCH

"TYPICAL SUBURB, TOTALLY NEW SCORECARD "



FULSHEAR, TX

Oxymorons can make for some interesting conversation if you're into that sort of thing. We all smirk a bit at phrases like "military intelligence" and "modern history." And there's something strangely intriguing about the idea of a "partial cease-fire" or "preventable death." But are oxymorons of any value beyond light, clever conversation?

For WordServe, a phrase that might be considered an oxymoron by some has become the central focus of their mission. They want to guide people to become "joyful servants" of Jesus.

# WORDSERVE CHURCH



*Life is Different*

## A Whole New Score

WordServe began weekly services in Fulshear, TX (outside of Houston) in 2009 as a daughter church of Grace Fellowship United Methodist Church. They launched in order to reach a new audience that was not responding to the methodology and approach of Grace Fellowship UMC. Twenty people from Grace followed Nolan Donald, the Lead Pastor of WordServe, to begin holding services at Huggins Elementary School.

Nolan honestly shares that when they began, he anticipated fast initial growth that would allow them to make an immediate impact. That just didn't happen. After the first year or so, it felt to Nolan and several other leaders like they were just going through the motions. The people who were a part of WordServe were happy, but there just wasn't any excitement. Mostly, the lack of excitement existed because they were all looking around, expecting to see more new people coming in. And they just weren't coming in.

Nolan and several members of the team went through an Auxano co::Lab process to help them discover and articulate their uniqueness. That process was the beginning of a new energy and focus for WordServe. By the end of the process, and with some coaching help from an Auxano Navigator, their newly articulated mission had captured their hearts.

They now had something to measure other than numbers! They were on the lookout for stories of people's lives being transformed as they lived out the love of Jesus as joyful servants in their everyday lives. These became the moments to celebrate, the fuel in the vision-tank, the score that they kept to make sure they were on mission.

## A Joyful Servant Story

There's a man at WordServe, let's call him John, who exemplifies the unique, focused mission of WordServe. John had a nominal church background and he became friends with an active member of WordServe. Over time, their relationship grew. John and his family came every once in a while to weekend services at WordServe, but didn't jump in right away. Then, John joined a small group. Within a year, John joined a team of joyful servants from WordServe that went to Guatemala to work on a water project that would dig a well to provide water for a village.

John returned from the trip completely different. His experience of serving alongside other joyful servants truly transformed his life. Now, John is telling others about the difference Jesus has made in his life.

**See? A simple oxymoron like "joyful servants" can be more powerful than you thought.**



**John returned from the trip completely different. His experience of serving alongside other joyful servants truly transformed his life. Now, John is telling others about the difference Jesus has made in his life.**

# LAKEPOINTE CHURCH

MAKING IT HARDER TO GO TO HELL IN HOT SPRINGS



## LITTLE ROCK, AR



- Annual MMA fight in parking lot? Check.
- World's shortest St. Patrick's Day Parade, complete with shot glasses that read, "Give Jesus a Shot"? Check.
- Exciting children's ministry where kids bring their parents to church? Check.

**Question:** How do you reach people who don't think they have a place for God or His church in their lives?

**Answer:** You never stop asking how to reach people far from God in unique ways and implementing never-tried-before ideas.



# LAKEPOINTE CHURCH

a place to belong as you change, and  
to change as you follow Jesus

LakePointe Church in Hot Springs, AR, lives out the idea that you can't keep doing the same things that have already been done and expect to get different results. Back in 2005, there was no shortage of churches in this large recreational community, but church planter Greg Bearss also knew there weren't any churches known for reaching those who'd been turned off to church.

Almost ten years later, LakePointe has grown into a diverse gathering of improbable followers of Christ. When the church gathers for worship, the ethnic diversity is easy to spot (African America, Asian, Hispanic, Caucasian), but you might not as readily recognize the police officer standing next to the drug dealer and both focused on Jesus.

**How can we uniquely reach people who don't think they have a place for God in their life?**

Greg's message, "No matter what your past life was like, or the baggage you bring with you, you belong at LakePointe." LakePointe's mission is a place to belong as you change, and a place to change as you follow Jesus.

The church's values are prayer, application of scripture, spiritual growth, integrity, outreach, family, and small groups. Their strategy for making disciples is: belong, change, and follow Jesus.

Consider one single mom's story. After the church moved into the remodeled grocery store space, they put up a billboard with a "wild-looking" dude on one end and an ordinary family on the other with words indicating that everyone was welcome. This single mom was driving down the street with her daughter, who (from the back seat) read the billboard and said, "Mommy, there's a place you fit in."

Words from an angel could not have been more prophetic. This single mom was a recovering addict who had been clean for several years but who hadn't found a church. She started to attend the church and asked to help out. While inputting connection card data, she noticed a trend: recently recovered addicts requesting prayer. As she prayed for and with these folks, God birthed in heart a redemptive passion for those facing the challenges of addiction. She now leads OneTeam, a Christ-focused recovery group that has helped launch a holistic model for rehabilitation that is having national impact. Called *The Hope Movement*, it helps women coming out of rehab become fully devoted followers of Jesus, and teaches basic life skills like finances, cooking, cleaning, and healthcare. Local city officials have taken note, and judges and local law enforcement are sentencing people to participate in the program or to go back to jail.

It's easier for a church to do same things every other church is doing. More often than not, copycat ministry produces even less fruit than the original. LakePointe has let go of the comfort of the familiar and embraced the felt uncertainty of Holy Spirit-led innovation that is often seeded by the question, "How can we uniquely reach people who don't think they have a place for God in their lives?"





## PLAINVIEW, TX

Men hate going to church, and few do.

That was the contention David Murrow made in his 2005 book, "Why Men Hate Going to Church." It was a wake-up call to many who hadn't realized how female-dominated most churches had become.

On the other hand, something special happens when men do go to church.

A study released in 2000 revealed that if a father does not go to church, regardless of the mother's faithfulness, only one child in fifty will grow up to become a regular church attender. If a father goes to church regularly, regardless of the mother's example, between 66% and 75% of their children will become churchgoers (consistent or inconsistent).

When you understand the decline in church attendance among men, and the profound implications of that, you realize that something must be done about it.



# HARVEST CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

*if a man is a disciple of Christ, and growing in his faith, women and children - everyone, really - should feel loved, safe, and protected in the presence of a godly man*

That was not Paul Cypert's original intention when he founded Harvest Christian Fellowship in 1988 in his living room with six people. Paul had a vision for starting a church that was life giving and full of grace, that worshipped God freely and taught God's truth.

From the beginning, and still today when they now have a lot more than six people, and offer three campuses around Texas, in Amarillo, Plainview, and Lubbock, Harvest has focused on loving people. For instance, they take attendance not by numbers but by names. They ask the question, **"How can we say that we love people if we don't even know their names?"** In addition to "Greeters" offering a smile and handshake, Harvest features "Tour Guides" who take a personal interest in the guests that visit their campuses each week. These tour guides work diligently to learn people's names and they make sure that every newcomer feels welcome, loved, and honored as a guest.

Harvest feels called to love everyone, but their focus is unmistakably, unabashedly, unashamedly on men. In fact, when asked to describe Harvest in one word, they chose "masculine." Further unpacking the word, the leaders of Harvest will refer to the "heart of the fathers" concept expressed in Malachi 4:6, the idea of a multigenerational ministry led by men, and a teamwork ethos shared by their leaders who refer to themselves as a "band of brothers."

Why? Paul will point out that there are few if any venues designed for men and able to help them with the issues with which they struggle on a daily basis. Campus Pastor Brad Snellgrove agrees, explaining that men need a place where they are respected and given the tools they need to lead. The staff will also tell you that the focus on men flows naturally out of who they are, as men. And then, and probably most importantly, there are those studies and statistics. Harvest is doing something about the "men problem" in the church today.

How are they doing it? Perhaps the better question is how aren't they doing it? Harvest works to make sure every Sunday message has a focus on men and how the teaching will apply to their lives. They also offer Bravehearts (men's groups), which meet early in the morning, every week, at every campus. The groups allow men to be men, and to be challenged, encouraged, and transparent. Men are

also encouraged to volunteer in every ministry of the church, and they do. It's not uncommon to go to the nursery and hand your baby off to a man. Harvest also has events they design especially for men: retreats, dove hunts, golf tournaments, etc.

The cool thing is that it's working. Over fifty percent of Harvest's attendance shaves their faces, not their legs, before driving to the church. And there are never-ending stories of life change happening as men encounter Jesus.

Caleb was a young college student struggling with addictions when he was invited to a Bravehearts group. He asked a lot of questions, started meeting with other men and reading the Bible, and today is a leader in Harvest's youth ministry.

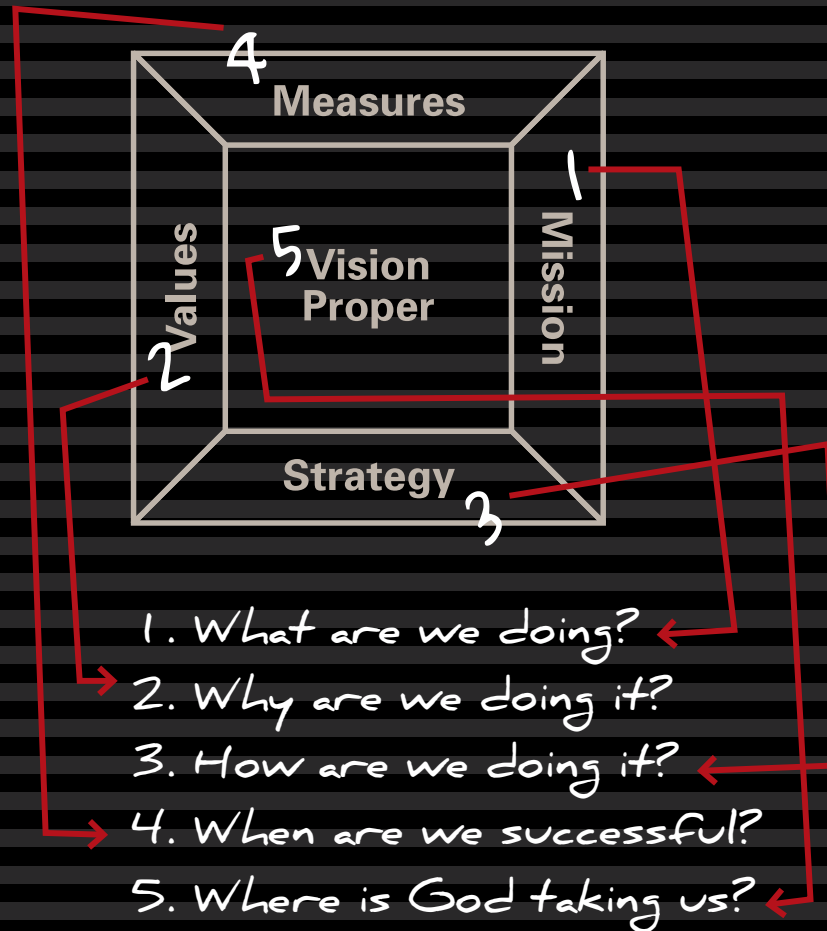
Cory was a boxer in his late twenties who started attending a Bravehearts group and Harvest's men's retreats. He's now leading his family in devotionals and dreaming about going into ministry.

Justen was raised in another church. When he was just entering college his father was invited to a Bravehearts group at Harvest. His parents decided to start attending Harvest on Sunday mornings, and soon Justen showed up. What he experienced amazed him. He started driving back and forth from college to attend and help out in any way he could. Eventually his experience with Harvest led him into ministry as a Campus Pastor and today he serves Harvest as Lead Pastor.

As a result of this, and the hard work of their Pastoral and Administrative teams, Paul Cypert, the Founding Pastor of Harvest, is now completely free to pour his energies into the next generation of leaders. Following the admonition of 2 Timothy 2:1, Paul is investing in the leadership. Of the 35+ staff members at all sites, all but 1 of these leaders have been called up from the ministries of the church. (And he got to Harvest as soon as he could.)

The stories go on and on. Of course not every story of life change at Harvest is about a man. But a lot of them are. And they're proud of that because they believe, **"if a man is a disciple of Christ, and growing in his faith, women and children - everyone, really - should feel loved, safe, and protected in the presence of a godly man."**

Churches that live out their vision with laser-focus make up the Unique 19. These churches are able to answer the five irreducible questions of leadership with clarity and conviction. How about you?



# Use these stories to enrich your own.

When I read stories of unique vision, I feel as though a window has been opened to let in a fresh breeze. The wind that blows is the freedom and the passion that comes when you know what you have been called by God to do. Can you see how staying real, simple, and intentional keeps the mission and values of The Cove alive in the hearts of its people? Does WordServe's clear focus on growing "joyful servants" inspire you to discover your unique clarity and focus? And are you inspired by how LakePointe Church's clarity and consistent communication of their mission is making a difference in people's lives?

We hope the testimony of these churches takes you a step closer to a liberated leadership. Too many churches are stuck in the proverbial strategy of "being all things to all people." So may I ask you... Do you sense a deep-down-in-your-soul kind of the conviction that comes from stunningly unique vision? Do your leaders share it? Have you ever named it?

Consider the axiom, focus expands. Harvest Christian Fellowship provides evidence of that. Their unashamed focus on reaching men, then challenging and encouraging them to be Godly men, ultimately affects the lives of those around them.

If these questions prompt you to progress, consider engaging the following team exercise:

Distribute the Unique 19 to your leadership and have them read it in advance of your next meeting. When you get together, follow this guide for dialogue and application:

## TEAM CONNECT QUESTIONS

- What story inspired you the most? Why?
- What church reminded you most of our own? In what way?

## TEAM CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

- Which one of the following terms best describes what you wish you had more of in your personal leadership? What about in our team leadership? Share a story that illustrates the word you selected.

## Freedom | Confidence | Passion | Momentum

- What is the single greatest barrier to experiencing more freedom, confidence, passion, and momentum as a team? Make a list on a white board.

## TEAM ACT QUESTIONS

Consider the following questions and related actions steps in order to remove your identified barriers:

- How have we relied on photocopied vision (another church model) from a book or conference instead of discovering our own? What can we give ourselves permission to "stop doing" as a church right now?
- How have we been "running too fast" on a ministry treadmill as leaders? Do we need to take dedicated time away to reflect, pray, dialogue, and discern our unique vision? If so, when is that time?
- Do we need more than a day away in order to fully discern what the next chapter of our ministry will look like? If so, calendar even more time.
- What is the best thing that God is doing in our church or ministry right now. How are we joining with Him? How are we talking about this? How can we put more energy in this?

May God richly bless your vision from Him and for Him!

- Will Mancini





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