



*The Church List for the Rest of Us*

2013 • ISSUE #2

NORTHWEST BIBLE CHURCH • MOSAIC CHURCH

REDEMPTION CHURCH • 360 CHURCH

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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 second 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



northwest  
bible church



DALLAS, TX

## NORTHWEST BIBLE CHURCH

"WHERE IT'S OK NOT TO BE FINE"

The north side of Dallas, TX, is not known for its connection to "reality." Maybe it's the affluence that is evident on every corner and in every subdivision that makes it feel that way. Or, it could be in the smiles that, at times, seem a little too broad or greetings that seem a little too boisterous. While it's true that some view this as just another expression of the "Texas way," the people of Northwest Bible view it differently—it can serve as a shiny veneer that people use to cover the real hurts and struggles.

## NORTHWEST BIBLE CHURCH

*inviting people into the unexpected joy  
of desperate dependence on Jesus*

The context where Northwest Bible Church is located provides a unique backdrop for their story. If following Christ, at its heart, is about admitting our need for a Savior, the culture on the north side of Dallas is not conducive. Self-sufficiency and maintaining a consistent facade that “everything’s fine” are so pervasive that a message which begins with an acknowledgment of need is distinctly counter-cultural.

The mission of Northwest Bible is “inviting people into the unexpected joy of desperate dependence on Jesus,” and they’ve been living out that mission for years. Originally launched in 1951, a small group of Christ-followers wanted to craft an environment where their children could explore the truth of the Bible. They were desperately dependent on Jesus—and each other—from day one.

Now, over 60 years later, the ministry of Northwest Bible looks quite a bit different, but their pursuit of creating authentic environments where people can admit their struggles and find freedom in their weakness continues to propel them forward.

Their Celebrate Recovery program (they call it Recovery for Life) has a profound influence on their entire church culture. Several years ago, an atheist who was dealing with an addiction started attending Recovery for Life. Even though he had a good education, his addiction—along with other choices—had left him without a job. He found a place where he could admit and deal with his failures in the weekly Recovery for Life meetings. After attending Recovery for Life for several months, he became a follower of Jesus, rejecting atheism and accepting the freedom and forgiveness in Christ. Recently, he interviewed for a position working in the Homeless Ministry of Northwest that reaches out to the homeless in downtown Dallas. And he got the job. By admitting his desperate need for Jesus, this man found hope for himself and now, wants to offer that same hope to others.



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Another story of desperate dependence is being lived out by a man at Northwest Bible diagnosed with ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease). He was a CEO of a growing company, a power broker of sorts in the Dallas area. He has stepped away from a life based on what he can do for himself and completely embraced a life of dependence on Jesus. His doctors are amazed that he’s still alive, living far beyond their projections. In fact, he’s now booked 45 days in advance as a inspiring speaker to men, where he shares from his state of love, dependence, and need.

**These are just two stories that are a part of the fabric of Northwest Bible. In an area known for its affluence and surface-level veneer, they’ve created a culture of authenticity and dependence that is truly life-giving.**

*Watch the story of a church “where it’s OK not to be ‘fine’”*





### Can a single question change the world?

In the fall of 2000, Mark DeYmaz asked his hairstylist, Precious, such a question. "Does Little Rock need a diverse church, one where individuals of varying backgrounds can worship God together as one?" Precious responded, "Mark, do you think it could ever happen here?"



## MOSAIC CHURCH

*reach people of all class, colors, and background*

While it's still said that 11:00 AM on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America, it isn't as true as it used to be, especially in Little Rock, Arkansas. DeYmaz launched Mosaic one year after he asked Precious that catalytic question with the vision to "reach people of all class, colors, and background." Since launching, Mosaic has grown into a congregation in which individuals formerly from 30 nations now gather to worship God in unity.

While Mosaic is not "a church focused on racial reconciliation," it does tweak the homogenous unit principle by being "a multi-ethnic, economically diverse church...seeking to know God and to make him known through the pursuit of unity in accordance with the prayer of Jesus Christ and patterned after the New Testament church at Antioch."

Consider the man from Syria, who arrived in Little Rock from Saudi Arabia just one month before September 11, 2001 with just two questions. First, he wondered if Christians really experienced joy in worshipping Christ. Second, he wanted to know how many Christians he could convert to Islam. He attended Mosaic, but instead of meeting Christians in want of conversation, he encountered the light of Christ and welcoming Christians who knew God as a loving and forgiving Father.

Consider Raymond, who started attending Mosaic soon after it moved into a refurbished Wal-Mart. Homeless and addicted to alcohol, Raymond had alienated himself from everyone close to him. During one pivotal service, Pastor Mark took Raymond's hands to pray with him and asked him to come forward and share his story. The congregation came forward to pray for him and embraced him warmly. It was the first physical affection Raymond had felt in a long time and helped him commit to rehab and a steady job.

Some churches wonder if they should be more diverse. Some pastors wonder how they can make diversity a reality. Mosaic's reality is that it organically became diverse by focusing on redemption. DeYmaz states, "redemption means bringing life to a depressed community." **Worship at Mosaic is characterized by the power and pleasure of God. Tears of joy, tears of movement, and tears of redemption all find their home at Mosaic.**

Mosaic doesn't believe God wants to use the church to bring healing to the race problem. Instead, Mosaic sees God using race to bring healing to the church.

**Worship at Mosaic is characterized by the power and pleasure of God. Tears of joy, tears of movement, and tears of redemption all find their home at Mosaic.**





# REDEMPTION CHURCH

"WE CAN ACCOMPLISH MORE TOGETHER  
THAN WE CAN APART"



**Question:** What do you get when you cross a cow and a trampoline?  
**Answer:** A milkshake.

**Question:** What do you get when you cross Godzilla and a parrot?  
**Answer:** I don't know, but if he asks for a cracker, give it to him!

**Question:** What do you get when you cross a caterpillar with a parrot?  
**Answer:** A walkie-talkie.

**Question:** What do you get when you cross an East Valley Bible Church  
and a Praxis Church and a Second Mile Church?  
**Answer:** Redemption Church.

TEMPE, AZ



## REDEMPTION CHURCH

*their measure of success is whether they're birthing and establishing healthy local congregations*

**So what is Redemption Church? That is an interesting question.**

Redemption Church is a church. That much is clear. Beyond that, things get a little murky. They are a unique blend of church merger and church multi-site. They call themselves multi-congregational, and that's probably the best way to describe them.

It all started several years ago when the leadership of three Phoenix-area churches started building friendships and networking together to serve the community. Over time they came to the conclusion that their churches would be better together than apart. It was a rather unprecedented idea in that each of the churches was healthy and growing. The merger was not an attempt to save dying churches. Rather, it was a proactive pursuit of a vision to grow and birth new churches.

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The three churches moved into the merger in 2011 with a confidence that the already-formed relationships and their shared theology would allow for a smooth transition, and they were right. Redemption Church has become a multi-congregational church, with a fully functional leadership team at each congregation. As opposed to a multi-site model, decisions are pushed down to the local congregation. There is no "mother ship" overseeing the satellites. Even church membership is pushed down to the local congregational level.



After a few years of multi-congregational life, Redemption is experiencing a variety of benefits:

- **Indigenous leadership:** The multi-congregational model honors local leaders and how they express leadership.
- **Leadership development:** Multiple congregations also increase opportunities for leadership development.
- **Cross-congregational synergy:** An idea for a ministry can be developed and piloted at one congregation. If it works, it can be shared with other congregations who can choose to implement it if they wish, without a long learning curve.
- **Economy of scale:** For instance, Redemption has gathered people by vocations cross-congregationally in a unified effort to impact people at their jobs.
- **Brand power:** Having multiple congregations in multiple towns around Phoenix, but all with the same name, allows for people across the city to become familiar with Redemption. People can refer their friends to the Redemption congregation that is closest to their home.
- **Collective preaching:** The pastors at the various congregations work on their sermons together producing a higher quality final product.
- **Increased specialization:** While the congregations function independently in some ways, there is also collaboration. And where there is collaboration there are opportunities to hire specialists to give energy and direction cross-congregationally.

Redemption Church's cross-congregational, multi-site merger is working. Their measure of success is birthing and establishing more healthy local congregations; and they are succeeding. In January 2011 they started with three, they now have six, and more are on the way.

**So, question: What do you get when you cross an East Valley Bible Church and a Praxis Church and a Second Mile Church into a Redemption Church? Answer: A multi-congregational church that is multiplying.**



## 360 CHURCH

"BUILDING A COURAGEOUS CHURCH WITH A  
1-TO-1 RELATIONAL MINDSET"



## SARASOTA, FL

Pastor Steve McCoy had a vision in 2006 for serving and reaching people outside of the local church. Five years later, Steve had what he calls "the moment" when a widow already in the church looked him in the eyes and said "Maybe if I weren't in 360, you would take care of me." That woman was his own mother.

Something was wrong. The church was five years old, had only 75 people attending, and even the pastor's mother felt uncared for. It was time to regroup and rethink. Three months into the process, the leaders of 360 reached out to Auxano to help shape a new, crystal clear vision.

## 360 CHURCH

*loving one person at a time*

The vision 360 gave birth to through that process has to do with the number four, but the magic number is one. Rather than reaching out to their city, they would reach in within their own four walls. And rather than striving to win the multitudes, they would focus on loving one person at a time. 360 has put together a unique, fun vision book (about half the pages are cartoons!) in which they proclaim, "If we are going to reach out to the world, we have to reach within our own 4 walls first. Anything less than this is inauthentic." The book focuses on the importance of person-to-person relationships, explaining two types of one-on-one discipleship the church now offers; mentoring and iron-sharpening iron. Whereas other churches view small groups as an end in themselves, 360 thinks of them as a bridge to get people from the big group setting to the ultimate goal – one-on-one relationships.

**If we are going to reach out to the world, we have to reach within our own 4 walls first. Anything less than this is inauthentic.**

The focus of 360's new strategy is not on pleasing consumeristic Christians in the church. Rather, the idea is that they are missionaries, but their mission field is within the four walls of their building. They trust that if they take care of people, God will give them more people. And they are convinced that taking care of people happens through one-on-one relationships. This change in thinking has required them to do a DNA transplant in their church and to retrain their leaders. Ultimately, it has impacted ... everything. Whereas in the past outreach would have been church-sponsored random acts of kindness, it's now Jazz Nights at the church with intentional connectors at each table to start building relationships with newcomers. And whereas hospitality used to be smiling greeters saying hi, it's now individuals seeking to welcome individuals and engage them in conversation.

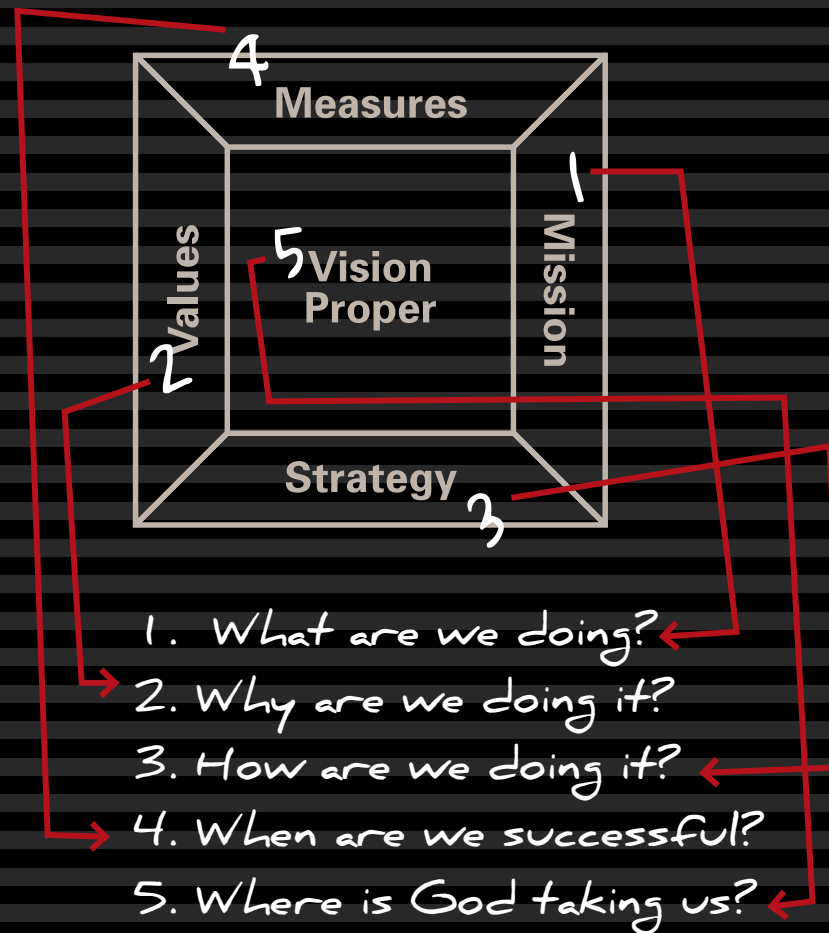
**Since going through the process of discovering the unique vision God has for them, 360 has exploded.** After five years the church had 75 people. Now, just two years later, they've jumped to 500. Why? The team at 360 will tell you it's having Vision Clarity, and the courage to live it out day after day.

With their new focus on relational intentionality, the church has some tremendous stories of impact and life-change. Jim, a staff member at the church, tells the story of Mike, a member of the church and part of a small group that met at the local YMCA to climb the rock walls together. While at the "Y," Mike met a guy who was by himself, struggling to climb the wall, and complaining about being too out of shape to benefit from the climbing wall. Mike started a conversation with him and ended up calling him later to ask about working out together to meet their personal goals. Stunned that Mike, a virtual stranger, cared that much, he said 'yes' and began what would be a pivotal friendship. Through this relational intentionality taught and demonstrated within the four walls of 360 Church, Mike made his one connection that led to a lasting friendship. In fact, that once lonely guy at the YMCA is now the staff member who tells this story. He was that guy! But the story of Mike and Jim doesn't stop there. Jim has since reproduced this in his own life through building another connection at that same climbing wall with a guy named Rodney. Replication is a natural part of the relation-building and investment culture of the church.

So is the new vision working? The numbers and stories seem to say so, but I guess to know for sure you need to ask Steve's mom.



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 feel the energy released by the unwavering vision of Redemption Church? Are you moved by Mosaic Church's story as you see how they are "bringing life to a depressed community?"

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 with just the right words? (Like Northwest Bible does with their mission or 360 Church does by living out their value of "relational intentionality?")

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 your 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" some things 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 the 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





[auxano.com](http://auxano.com)