



NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD, SBC
NAMB

Memorandum

To: Jerry Pipes, Gerry Hutchinson, Jean White, Donoso Escobar
From: Phil Jones and Bob Rennier
Date: April 14, 2000
Re: *Ministry Evangelism Toolkit* Focus Groups

Our bottom line assessment of the focus groups is that they responded very favorably to the *Ministry Evangelism Toolkit* in general and to the manual *His Heart, Our Hands*, specifically. One caveat is that the focus groups were comprised of pastors and layperson that were already highly involved in ministry evangelism. Thus, they already have a heart for ministry evangelism and are not truly representative of the target audiences that you hope will become involved as a result of reading the manual. Still, their comments are helpful in further refining the toolkit. In particular, the focus groups were diverse in that they represented laity and clergy, large and small churches, and several different racial and ethnic groups.

The consensus from all the groups is that there is a need for this type of resource. Some even seemed thrilled to have in their hands the manual, *His Heart, Our Hands*, having struggled to start ministries without the aid of easily available published resources. Even when queried about published resources available to them when starting existing evangelism ministries in their churches most indicated there was not much available and they had to hunt for the resources they found. Only one or two participants mentioned *Meeting Needs Sharing Christ* by Atkinson and Roesel. They viewed this book as more motivational and Bible study with little “how-to.” Thus, this book is not seen as competition for *His Heart, Our Hands*.

Two questions dealt with the target audience for the *Ministry Evangelism Toolkit*. One question asked who is responsible for starting evangelism ministries. Pastors were a little more likely to indicate that pastors were the ones responsible for initiating ministries while laypersons tended to say laypersons. In further discussion, the vision for starting ministries comes from many places—from pastors, laypersons, associational staff, etc. Clearly, pastors are facilitators of ministry evangelism while laity are the implementers and sustainers of ministry. This segues into the second question, about who should be the audience for the toolkit. My interpretation is that the target audience for the whole toolkit is a pastor or the local church. It was fairly clear that the manual, *His Heart, Our Hands* should be targeted to both clergy and laity. Many of the pastors in the focus groups indicated they would give all or part of the manual to persons in their church to read. It seems that laypersons may be the ultimate consumer of this material, so the materials will need to be readable and understandable by laypersons.

Most of the participants like the toolkit concept, even marketing the resources as a toolbox. Pastors in particular seemed to like the concept of having all resources to ministry evangelism in one place. Generally, the groups thought the price of \$49.95 reasonable for a church. There was discussion in San Antonio among pastors about the price being too high for small churches.

A significant suggestion, heard from most groups, was that the manual *His Heart, Our Hands*, be made available separately from the toolkit. This could not only help those churches unable to afford the toolkit but would make additional copies easily available for those churches with a toolkit that want to distribute the manual more widely to church members. There were other suggestions related to packaging. A major suggestion was to print the manual in a three-ring notebook format so that sections of the document can easily be removed, copied, distributed and updated. This seemed to have wide appeal with the pastors group in San Antonio. The groups also seemed enthusiastic about the manual being translated into additional languages.

The audiences generally found the material in the manual to be well written and understandable although they seemed to think the book needed significant editing. The document seems to have many styles of writing and lacks the overall voice of one editor. It was noted that the manual did not flow well from chapter to chapter. Some chapters seem to be detailed while others are in outline form. The table of contents did not always match chapter titles. The manual suffers from lack of an introduction and overview.

The manual also suffers from lack of visual appeal. It looks too busy and cluttered. Additional white space, graphics, pull quotes, interesting statistics, section dividers, and even differing section colors were offered as suggestions for making the document more visually appealing.

In the focus groups, we examined specific chapters. Chapter 1 was generally considered good although one group suggested different scripture passages be included. The pastors said that it was simple and understandable and they felt like they could give it to laity. Although there was not uniformity of opinion, most like the stories/testimonies in the chapter. Several suggestions were made that the material in chapter one be reworked into Bible studies that could be taught or given to laypersons. Generally, the focus groups thought the material encouraging and motivating.

Chapter 3 lists the eight major steps in starting a new ministry. Several noted that the steps did not list a "kick off" or implementation of the ministry. Another suggestion was that an evaluation step be included. It was noted that taking advantage of evangelistic events and involving families are not steps but some type of supporting material that could be dealt with in other ways in the book. Some respondents viewed evangelistic events and involving families as strategies rather than steps in a process.

Chapter 13 deals with ministry action plans. Participants thought these were a good representative listing of ministries and there was enough material in each to get started although additional resources would need to be consulted. Multihousing, disaster relief, and counseling (divorce recovery, grief support, etc.) were suggested as additions to the list. Another suggested addition is ministries that are preventative rather than just crisis intervention, e.g., family enrichment.

We specifically asked about the legal material in chapters 7 and 8 related to charitable choice and creation of a 501c(3) organization. The consensus was that this is helpful and understandable material. A suggestion was made that a note be included that a church should seek legal help if it moves in these directions. There was also a comment that this material interrupted the flow of the manual and should be moved to the back of the book or treated elsewhere.

For the needs assessment material in chapter 4, it was suggested that the local association be listed as a resource for conducting assessments and the availability of demographic information from state convention or SBC sources should be noted.

We did not have time to talk to each group about the material in Chapter 14 related to the supporting website for the toolkit. However, the topic came up in every focus group and the concept was readily endorsed. Generally, there was the impression that the information in the manual would provide a good start to doing ministry evangelism; however, additional information would be needed. The website could provide additional resources or links to resources for ministry. In particular, supporting discussion groups focused on specific ministry action plans or providing links to churches and individuals successfully implementing specific action plans would be extremely helpful.

Additional suggestions include:

- Having a chapter on pastoral leadership related to implementing a ministry. (This information could be included in a leader's guide.) It should include talking about casting vision, clarify purpose, setting goals and evaluation.
- Having a chapter on funding and resourcing a ministry
- Devoting a chapter or appendix to resources rather than spreading them throughout the manual or in addition to their current locations within the manual
- Incorporating into the toolkit teaching materials for the manual (especially for chapter 1), a workbook, and a PowerPoint presentation
- Using Acts 2:42-47 as a pivotal passage in chapter 1
- Providing information on liability and cost of insurance