

**STRATEGIES FOR ADVANCING A NEW MINISTRY PHILOSOPHY:
EQUIPPING LEADERS FOR ONGOING REVITALIZATION OF MARANATHA
WORSHIP CENTER, WICHITA, KANSAS**

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Rapid church growth and multiple service formats can easily threaten the strength of a congregation built on close relationships and a strong sense of belonging. Maranatha Worship Center in Wichita, Kansas, faced such a crossroads. Maranatha's chosen philosophy centers on establishing an atmosphere of belonging and acceptance as its primary means of outreach. As the church approached 700 in weekly attendance, maintaining such an atmosphere demanded new intentionality. This project followed the congregation's pursuit of aspirational values and then measured the impact of those efforts on the church's environment.

The field project focused action on the leadership council—a group of forty individuals serving both pastoral staff and lay ministry roles. Over a six-month period, each individual was asked to meet someone, pray with or promise to pray for someone, and help someone each week. This “MPH” initiative was coupled with four training sessions in Maranatha's values.

A pretest and posttest survey demonstrated significant shifts among leader attitudes toward to desired values. The most remarkable of the project's findings, however, saw visitor return and retention rates skyrocket to levels well beyond the church's previous experience and that commonly reported by other growing congregations.

Through a dual approach of intentional action and training, the project demonstrated the potential for achieving aspirational values. It also demonstrated the capacity of Maranatha's values to lead the congregation toward church growth and effectiveness. The challenge of extending belonging to the outsider, the project's theological focus, continues to be excellent and relevant fodder for extended consideration.