

## ROBIN LEE BLAKNEY



*Assistant Dean for the Harrison School of Graduate Studies,  
Southwestern Assemblies of God University; Waxahachie, TX*

***Transmission of Holistic Spiritual Formation Disciplines to  
Students, Faculty, and Staff of Southwestern Assemblies of God  
University***

Project Adviser: Dr. Randy Walls

Biblical Adviser: Dr. Benny Aker

Spiritual disciplines help Christians move toward a more proper spiritual formation that humankind enjoyed before the Fall in the Garden of Eden. The results of the Fall included the disfiguring of the physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional image that God created. In an effort to return to the proper image, mature Christians commonly practice the traditional disciplines of prayer, Bible study, giving, worship, and service. However, the disciplines of rest, exercise, diet, simplicity, and celebration are less emphasized yet important for Christians desiring to grow in their spiritual formation.

This project sought to re-value these less-emphasized disciplines among a group of volunteers who showed interest in growing in their spiritual formation. The participants in this project included four cohorts of faculty and staff and one cohort of students at Southwestern Assemblies of God University. Members of the cohorts received daily correspondence encouraging them in the practice of rest, exercise, diet, simplicity and celebration. The encouragement came in the form of e-mails, cards, texts, personal visits, prayer with the volunteers, and meals together.

The completion of the project established that individuals can improve the practice of rest, exercise, diet, simplicity, and celebration through education, regular encouragement, prayer, and positive peer pressure. Statistically significant increases were measured in the practice of these less-emphasized disciplines.

## DEBORAH FULTHORP

Ordained Minister, North Carolina District of the Assemblies of God



*Spirit-Empowered Women in Church Leadership: An Undergraduate Course for Southwestern Assemblies of God University in Waxahachie, TX, with Local Church Implementation*

Project Adviser: Dr. Joy Qualls  
Biblical Adviser: Dr. LeRoy Bartel

Various ministers and laity within the Assemblies of God (AG) misunderstand the Pentecostal moorings of women in church leadership. Whether this misunderstanding is due to ignorance, misconceptions, or influence from cessationist or reformed theologies, it leads to a lack of education among local church constituents as well as among AG ministers.

To counteract the missing component of Pentecostal women actively engaging in all levels of church leadership, this project established a biblical-theological foundation and general review of contemporary literature and incorporated that research into a curriculum and course for use in local churches as well as Assemblies of God institutes of higher education. Furthermore, the project exposed the challenges of women in ministry through surveys, brought about measurable changes, and educated ministers and laity on how the Spirit empowers women for all levels of church leadership. The intervention and research efforts resulted in a paradigm shift to understand the Spirit's inclusion of both men and women into vocational ministry.

The project resulted in: 1) the establishment of a strong biblical-theological foundation for women in church leadership, 2) a course usable for an institute of higher education as well as the local church, and 3) a course specialized for training Spirit-empowered women for ministry and leadership.

## KEVIN R. HOFFMAN



Congregational Care Pastor, Vineyard Church; Beavercreek, OH

*Developing a Faith-based Early Intervention Program for Adults with Alcohol and Drug Issues*

Project Adviser: [Dr. Linda Mercadante](#)

Biblical Adviser: [Dr. Andrew Sung Park](#)

A gap between prevention and treatment exists in the faith-based service continuum of care in work with adults who suffer with alcohol and other drug (AoD) problems. Faith-based mutual-help groups, such as Celebrate Recovery, exist. Treatment programs functioning from a faith-based model also occur in outpatient, intensive outpatient, residential, and inpatient treatment settings, such as those operated by Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Centers and Teen Challenge Centers. However, no faith-based early intervention programs are available for adults who face initial legal consequences for their use of AoD. Members of the judiciary, probation officers, applicable court administrators, attorneys, Certified Employee Assistance Programs, and professionals in the counseling field can serve their respective clients better by allowing them to participate in a faith-based early intervention program.

This project bridges the continuum care gap between prevention and treatment for people with AoD issues through the creation of a faith-based early intervention model targeting adults with alcohol and drug issues, particularly individuals with first-time alcohol and other drug offences. Initial assessment of the project indicated an effective EIP experience for three individuals. While a sample pool of three does not provide sufficient statistical data to fully substantiate the effectiveness of the EIP, it resulted in the creation of an EIP model that can be replicated in other churches and faith-based organizations.

## ROBERT W. INGRAM



Lead Pastor, Full Gospel Fellowship Church; Springfield Township, Burlington County, NJ

***Developing Momentum: Stimulating Spiritual Growth through Discipleship Training at Full Gospel Fellowship Church***

Project Adviser: Dr. Randy Walls

Biblical Adviser: Dr. Benny Aker

Full Gospel Fellowship (FGF) has come a long way in the last five years, transforming from an aging congregation with few children to a growing church with increasing numbers of youth and children. Though many at FGF became Christians decades ago, few had systematically studied the Bible and understood what discipleship entails or the commitment necessary to serve the Lord.

Teaching discipleship provided the best solution to combat this lack of spiritual commitment and growth. Discipleship has become the major thrust of FGF for over a year including the project's eight weeks of teaching and the development of a corresponding student manual, which began the process of discipleship by engaging congregants in the Scriptures.

The quantitative assessment following the teaching showed positive growth in all areas except one. Qualitative assessment rated the course well, and comments from participants proved insightful. Participants became engaged in the process and now desire an extended discipleship program that includes more time for discussion.

Understanding and embracing discipleship gives the congregation the expectation for growth in their own lives and a desire to reach out to the community. Discipleship training at FGF has become the pillar of the church for future growth and plans.

## MARVIN J. MILLER

Chair-Elect, KSDE Special Education Advisory Council; Topeka, KS



*Serving People with Intellectual Disabilities: A Comparative Investigation of the Perception of Family Caregivers and Kansas Ministry Network Credential Holders*

Project Adviser: Dr. Amos Yong

Biblical Adviser: Dr. Doug Oss

In recent years, church leaders have struggled to integrate persons with disabilities and their family caregivers into the regular life of the church. A misunderstanding of the disability culture combined with a lack of resources and volunteers effectively curtail ministry efforts for successful integration and inclusion for persons with disabilities.

This comparative investigative study of both clergy and family caregivers of persons with intellectual disability provides an initial foundation for clergy to envision effective ministry in mutual relationship. This project surveyed eighty-four Assemblies of God Kansas Ministry Network credential holding clergy members as well as thirty-six adult family caregivers of persons with disability. The survey also asked each group to predict the response of the other.

The research suggests the following: (1) clergy members have little awareness of their discrepancies between claimed theology and supportive practice, (2) both clergy and caregivers require additional opportunities to develop mutual understanding, (3) very few churches attempt inclusionary practice or intentional targeted outreach in comparison to the prevalence of disability, (4) congregations can successfully implement some level of disability ministry despite their size or status, and (5) churches would benefit by collaborating with existing local social agencies.

Local pastors can build bridges alongside those within the disability community to further inclusion and create co-laborers for the work of the gospel.

## MELISSA LYNN OLLENDIECK



Chaplain, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; Prescott, AZ

***Grow the Fruit of the Spirit: The Coach Approach to Centering Prayer***

Project Adviser: Dr. Bob Dale

Biblical Adviser: Dr. David Clark

The busy church culture of the twenty-first century does not encourage individuals to focus on the foundational elements of Christianity, as exemplified in the lack of spiritual fruit among many Christians. In order to address this issue, this project utilizes Centering Prayer as a means for cultivating the fruit of the Spirit in a believer's life through the use of coaching, both individually and as a group. Coaching and Centering Prayer serve as the catalysts for the participants' spiritual growth. The project also compares group coaching to group-plus-individual coaching to determine which form of coaching results in greater growth. Furthermore, it determines the area in which participants experience the most growth.

The data gathered for the project compared two coaching groups. Group 1 received group coaching only while Group 2 received a combination of group-plus-individual coaching. A comparison of pre- and post-experience scores for the fruit of the Spirit assessed suggests that group-plus-individual coaching was more effective than group coaching alone. Participants who received group-plus-individual coaching (Group 2) grew most in the area of gentleness.

As a result of this project, more coaches can utilize the group-plus-individual coaching model to help believers develop the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

## BRENDA C. PACE

Author, Speaker, Military Ministry Consultant



### *The Journey of a Military Wife: God's Truth for Every Step*

Project Adviser: American Bible Society (Book Option)

Biblical Adviser: Dr. David Clark

Whether in war or peace, a military wife faces unique challenges. America's involvement in the ongoing conflict in the Middle East has left the military wife in need of spiritual support to sustain her in uncertain times. In cooperation with the American Bible Society Armed Services Ministry, this project looks to the Word of God as a valid foundation for the military wife in her unique life context. As a complete text, the project offers an overview of biblical insight for the military wife. Stand-alone sections address specific aspects of military life a wife will face over the course of her husband's career to include, marriage and family issues, deployment, reintegration, relocation, and transitions.

The journey motif in the Bible serves as the metaphor for this project's structure. Scriptural travel stories provide a sound approach to relate biblical truths and application to military wives who experience multiple moves, deployments, temporary duty assignments, family separations, and other transitions inherent to a life of military service. Studying such stories will point the military wife to the Lord for direction and help. This project emphasizes Scripture as the basis for the military wife to understand not only God's care and concern for her, but also to recognize and utilize God's Word as the answer for issues of everyday life and a guidebook for victorious living.

## DAVID A. PARKER



Pastor, Northwoods Assembly; Tipp City, OH

*A Clinical Pastoral Resource Digest for Special Care Unit Ministry*

Project Adviser: Dr. Larry Cooper

Biblical Adviser: Dr. David Clark

The projected growth of the aging population in America means more people will be at risk of developing Alzheimer's disease or some other form of dementia. Those who suffer from dementia need spiritual care. Many are elderly and receive treatment in clinical care units with limited access. The patient is locked in for protection.

A review of general and theological literature indicates fear, isolation, and depression as thematic needs common to these patients.

This project prepared spiritual care procedures, lessons, and ministry intervention to target thematic needs of the elderly in clinical care and used the material in a pilot study to see if the intervention would improve patients' spiritual outlook.

Eighty-three patients in five different facilities were evaluated; a test comparing the mean scores of patients before and after the intervention indicated a significant improvement in spiritual outlook after the intervention.

This material resulted in the first issue of a Resource Digest for special care ministry to address the spiritual needs of elderly patients with dementia-related illness in limited access clinical care units.

## JEFFERY PORTMANN

Lead Pastor, newhope Church; Puyallup, WA



### *Intentional Apprenticing at a HUB Church for Greater Effectiveness in Church Planting*

Project Adviser: Dr. Mel Ming

Biblical Adviser: Dr. Waldemar Kowalski

Aspiring church planters may experience a lack of heightened effectiveness if they do not engage in intentional apprenticeship.

Since the essence of an apprenticeship imparts the why and how of a skill from an experienced individual to the learner, those who understand and commit to apprenticeship can experience the benefits of a multiplying church.

This project examined the biblical precedence for apprenticeships by utilizing the researching select biblical apprentice relationships. Additionally, the general literature review portion of this project demonstrated that optimal apprenticing takes place up close and in real-time, which allows for critical coaching conversations to further develop the proficiency of the learner.

The one-year apprenticeship at Newlife, a HUB Church,<sup>1</sup> as well as the accompanying 360 Personal Leadership and Church Planting Readiness Assessment, provided an essential hands-on learning opportunity, which reinforced the importance of engaging in a local church for greater effectiveness in church planting. The outcome was the launch of newhope, a HUB church that applied the insights and practical applications gleaned from the apprenticeship.

<sup>1</sup> A HUB church is defined as an apprentice center where church planters receive hands-on training, financial and experiential resources, and are relationally connected to others at various points in their apprentice journey on either a voluntary or paid basis.

## CHRISTOPHER RAILEY

Senior Director of Leadership and Church Development, General Council of the Assemblies of God; Springfield, MO



### *A Healthy Church in Every Community: Creating a Culture of Multiplication in the Assemblies of God USA*

Project Adviser: [Dr. Doug Oss](#)

The North American Church faces a crisis in the twenty-first century. The majority of Evangelical churches find themselves in a state of plateau or decline, and the effects of urbanization, globalization, and secularization present unprecedented challenges and opportunities for church leaders. The source of hope and optimism, however, lies in the biblical mandate and historical precedent for the planting and multiplication of new churches. After 100 years of rapid multiplication, the Assemblies of God (AG) remains a leader in church multiplication. However, to overcome church closure rates and U.S. population growth, new strategies and training methods will become essential to future success.

This project creates a new culture of multiplication in the Assemblies of God USA by researching, designing, and, ultimately, implementing a revised version of church planter training that develops healthy leaders who plant healthy churches with a greater propensity for multiplication. This training will combine the current emphasis on church planting principles with a new focus on practical application and resources so as to provide church planters in the Assemblies of God the most relevant and effective church planter training available.

## F. WESLEY SHORTRIDGE



Lead Pastor, Liberty Community Church; Bealeton, VA

*Codependency in Church Systems: The Development of an Instrument to Assess Healthy Church Leadership*

Project Adviser: Dr. Johan Mostert

Biblical Adviser: Dr. Doug Oss

In spite of the prevalence of methods and literature devoted to church health, many churches remain plateaued or are declining. Some churches ignore reality and base their worth and identity on things less than biblical identity and Christian mission. Many declining churches demonstrate an environment similar to the codependency seen in addictive family systems.

The published literature has expanded the understanding of the concept of codependency that was traditionally applied to family systems affected by alcohol and substance abuse by applying it to dysfunctional organizational structures. This project builds on this research. It investigated the hypothesis that dysfunctional churches exhibit dynamics similar to codependent family systems. The project adapted the Spann-Fischer Scale for Codependency, and in a pilot study of nine churches, two scales were developed: Church Health ( $\alpha = .891$ ) and Church Codependency ( $\alpha = .745$ ). A moderate negative correlation ( $r = -.431$ ) between these scales supported this hypothesis. It appears that the concept of codependency possesses elements that could assist church leaders to better understand dysfunctional churches. The project suggests a new approach to church health in certain environments and provides a new lens through which those desiring to help the local church grow might view their work.

## RANDAL EUGENE SMITH



President, Clearpoint Coaching LLC; Peabody, MA

*Embracing Intentional Leadership Succession by Senior Leaders over 55 in New England*

Project Adviser: Dr. James Williams

Biblical Adviser: Dr. David Clark

The wave of Baby Boomers entering retirement is forcing organizations of every type to seriously consider the looming leadership transition before them. Churches are no exception. The question of who leads next faces thousands of church boards. For years, judicatory leaders, local church elders, or bishops have spearheaded the work of succession. In more independent systems of governance, such as the Assemblies of God (AG), recommendations are solicited from area leaders and given to local pastoral search teams who, in turn, sift through the qualifications to arrive at a candidate who is presented to the congregation. However, this project suggests an alternative. Local churches must embrace a culture of leadership development that will identify, train, and eventually appoint high capacity learners in places of significant ministry, including the office of senior pastor. This process must be “intentional and homegrown.”<sup>2</sup>

Eight senior leaders in the Southern New England Network of the Assemblies of God participated in a three-part process consisting of presentation, coaching, and planning. They attended a six-hour coach approach seminar during which they examined a series of articles, Scriptures, and case studies on leadership succession. They were then asked to produce a personal and a corporate succession plan for their local ministries. Participants completed a survey prior to the seminar and a subsequent follow up survey. In essence, this project sought to inform and give permission for long-term pastoral leaders nearing retirement age to consider and embrace succession as a preferred system of transition.

<sup>2</sup> Naomi Dowdy, *Moving On and Moving Up* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2010), 28.

## DOUGLAS G. SULLIVAN

Chaplain, Hospice & Emergency Services; Waxahachie, TX



### *Incarnational Transformation in Palliative Care: Equipping Hospice Chaplains to Impact Patients, Families, Caregivers, and Staff through the Ministry of Presence*

Project Adviser: Dr. Larry Hester

Biblical Adviser: Dr. LeRoy Bartel

Hospice chaplains are critically important people of God, reaching out to dying patients and their families, who are facing unique challenges while dealing with the crises of death. An effective theological foundation and a solid understanding of the reality that constitutes providing spiritual care greatly aided these chaplains to benefit from the serious reflection on both the increased knowledge of the world of hospice care and the role of the spiritual counselors that this project advocated. This foundation enabled them to build on the benefits and overcome the frustrating challenges many face each day.

This project developed online courses to equip hospice chaplains for ministry. Fifty-eight prospective and seasoned chaplains participated in the online courses through the training websites. It also included conducting interviews with thirteen experienced psychosocial and spiritual care providers in hospice care. The online training emphasized the world of hospice and palliative care by introducing aspiring chaplains to the spiritual care of the dying and their families in this unique healthcare environment.

Findings from composite test scores and program evaluation surveys revealed course effectiveness. This feedback also allowed participants to make immediate applications in the care of their patients, families, caregivers, and other staff. Each evaluation instrument showed that participants experienced a significant increase in the retention of the content. Provision of resource materials and immediate application of the concepts to real-life situations enhanced this retention for many participants.

## TIMOTHY VANDEN LANGENBERG



Senior Pastor, Word of Life Church; Hutchinson, MN

***Revitalizing Wesley United Methodist Church by Reclaiming a Biblical Understanding of the Role of Pastor***

Project Adviser: [Dr. Mike Clarensau](#)

Biblical Adviser: [Dr. Doug Oss](#)

This project sought to address the need for revitalization and restoration of church health at Wesley United Methodist Church in Wausau, Wisconsin, following a decade of high turnover of pastors. The results of this high turnover included conflict within the congregation, mistrust of denominational leaders, and mixed and often contradictory expectations of the pastors.

To address these issues and to seek a remedy, the project examined the role of the shepherd-pastor through biblical and theological literature and in a general review of contemporary literature on the subject. Next, the project presented a six-session class for the church members to share information about how a biblical understanding of the role of pastors is critical to church health. A six-part sermon series, utilizing the class material, was also part of the project. Interviews with key congregational and denominational leaders contributed rich insight into the issues involved and the need for the revitalization which the project hopes to achieve.

Few church members and leaders chose to participate in the class. Lack of participation did not render the effects of the project as null, however, but revealed the depth of the issues ingrained at Wesley United Methodist Church, which the scope of the project was unable to fully address.

Revitalization through this project as applied in future ministry contexts can offer hope of church health and even growth, using God's plan of leadership.