

*THE HISTORY, ADOPTION AND  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
LEADERSHIP CENTER TRAINING MODEL  
WITHIN THE  
NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE*

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NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST CONFERENCE  
*LEADERSHIP CENTER INITIATIVE*

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**MISSION:**

Bring glory to God by equipping believers, in the context of the local church, to do the work God has uniquely and individually called them to do.

**VISION:**

By means of the Leadership Center Training Model, contribute to the spiritual formation and skill development of those disciples who are called to lead, to prepare them to be the kind of servant leader that Jesus modeled [John 13:5].

**PURPOSE (GOAL OR OBJECTIVE):**

- Equip believers to hear God's individual and specific call for their lives
- Train believers in the principles of servant leadership that will enable them to complete the work God has uniquely called them to do
- Encourage local church pastors to add to their leading, developing others to lead
- Resource local leadership development movements, enabling them to reach out to other churches within their sphere of influence to expand the movement, to the glory of God.

**VALUES:**

- <sup>11</sup> *And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,* <sup>12</sup> *for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ . . .* <sup>16</sup> *From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part.* Ephesians 4:11-12, 16. —Holman Christian Standard Bible
- God's principle purpose is to foster a *relationship* with His followers
- Biblically-based servant-leadership as exhibited by Jesus (John 13:13-17) is the principle leadership concept espoused by the Leadership Center initiative
- All of creation is a reflection of God's glory (Psalms 19:1-4a) and He has invited mankind (individually and collectively) to participate with Him in developing (to rule, have dominion) and caring for what He has created (Genesis 1:28)
- Disciples are called individually and collectively to share the message of salvation through Jesus Christ throughout all the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15) to expand the Kingdom
- God has called each of His disciples to both general and specific works (Ephesians 2:10) that He has prepared in advance for disciples to complete during their life
- The local church, or cluster of churches working together are the primary place for intentional leadership development to take place, which over time influences the local church leadership culture
- God's disciples have the potential of hearing Him speak (John 10:2-4) and provide direction in their journey to fulfill His purposes for and in the believer's life
- Spiritual formation is a journey, a process of life-long learning, facilitated in part by mentoring relationships and an intentional pursuit of knowing God
- God begins to work first *in*, and then *through* the believer, therefore, focus begins first with character formation and progresses through skill development
- Spiritual authority is the base by which godly leaders lead *Christianly*.

**PREFACE –**

This paper will present a general overview of the leadership development movement within the North American Baptist Conference. Though there are some specific recommendations embedded throughout, in many respects there is a distinct “ministry philosophy” lens through which envisioning what is possible, in terms of outcomes, and what may be needed, in terms of leadership development, may be viewed.

Leadership principles that have been successfully applied in industry may be mentioned in this paper. When those principles are sound, and they do not conflict with biblical principles, entertaining those principles within a ministry context will likely have value – all truth is God’s truth.

This paper is structured as follows:

- Introduction
- Background on the Leadership Development Movement
- Beginning with the End in Mind
- Operating on the Boundary Line
- Threading the Needle
- In Conclusion

## INTRODUCTION –

Some have suggested that systems and procedures, inventories, information and programs, controls, budgets and buildings are *managed*. People are *led*.

Leadership then, is a unique activity associated exclusively with people. When people are ‘managed’, they typically feel used, abused and undervalued. When people are led, they typically feel valued, part of something greater than themselves, and significant. It was a particular indictment then, at a recent conference of executives and managers of some of the largest philanthropic foundations in the U.S., that it was observed that the country was being over-managed and under-led. [Understanding Leadership, Tom Marshall, 2003. Introduction.]

Pastors in the North American Baptist Conference have come to a similar conclusion. In a Conference-wide study conducted by J. David Schmidt and Associates in 2001 the author drew a compelling conclusion (following statements taken as written in the Report):

*On the Home Missions survey, senior pastors identified as their number one resource need: raising up leaders and training them (to lead).*

*The biggest issues, challenges, or struggles listed (open ended) by pastors in the Home Missions survey were:*

- *Leadership team development*
- *Spiritual formation*
- *Actual life change*
- *Staffing for the future*

[Preliminary Observations and Recommendations, Trends in Communications. Tab 3 p.5.]

*Referring again to the Home Missions study – 50% or more of the pastors said they have a HIGH need for help in the following areas to better lead their church:*

- *Raising and training leaders (to lead)*
- *Building passionate disciples*

[*abid.* p.6.]

(Emphasis not added in any of the above quotations)

It was from this clear message from pastors within the North American Baptist Conference that the Vision and Purpose of the Leadership Center movement was derived. Acknowledging the stewardship nature of NAB’s responsibility, the Leadership Center movement was launched to provide a means to assist the local church in her efforts to make disciples by offering a model for discipling believers, identifying and training leaders from within

the local church, and developing passionate followers of Christ, equipped to step into positions of servant leadership – see Vision and Purpose.

## BACKGROUND ON THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MOVEMENT –

It has become increasingly clear that the leadership development initiative undertaken by the North American Baptist Conference in 2002 proposes an important change in the way ministry is conducted in many churches – bringing an intentional focus to the development of lay leaders. For leadership development to be truly effective, and thus realize the downstream purpose (see Purpose statement), a comprehensive up-front investment in emerging leaders is brought to bear with an eye toward equipping them to respond to the works God has prepared for them to do [Ephesians 2:10].

The Leadership Center Training Model (LCTM) was adopted by the Conference, following a review of alternative leadership training models, due principally to the comprehensive nature of its approach to leadership development.

**DEFINITION:** A leadership center is a movement which seeks to foster a life-long approach to the identification and development of Christian leaders through networking local churches with leadership educational resources, in order to empower men and women committed to God’s redemptive purposes through the service of leadership. –VantagePoint<sup>3</sup>

The LCTM is divided into three years, referred to as “Phases”. Table 1 outlines the Model’s structure.

**Table 1**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Emerging Phase</b>	Character formation emphasis	For disciples who reflect leadership potential as laity, or a propensity toward vocational ministry.
<b>†Equipping Phase</b>	Skill formation emphasis	For disciples seeking leadership skill development or vocational preparation for ministry.  Lay Track (Track 1)  Seminary Track (Track 2)
<b>Enriching Phase</b>	Strategy formation emphasis	For ongoing development of disciples toward greater focus in developing themselves and others as leaders.

†During the Equipping Phase, participants are presented with an option to pursue a “Seminary Track” that would result in a Master of Arts degree upon completion of the requirements for graduation by the seminary attended.

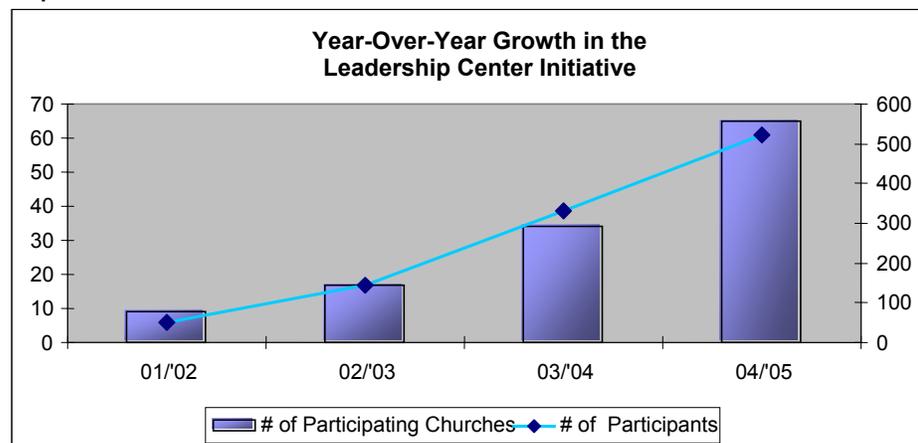
Table 2 highlights growth in the number of churches and participants from program inception. These data may be viewed as an *indirect reflection* of the value to the local church and the value received by individual emerging leaders. This measure is viewed as indirect in that the spiritual formation that occurs, and the change in the sense of personal call, is not something that is measurable ultimately, in a quantifiable sense.

**Table 2**

Number of Participating Churches				Number of Participants			
01/'02	02/'03	03/'04	04/'05	01/'02	02/'03	03/'04	04/'05
9	17	34	65	50	145	330	523
				Total Participation from Program Inception			<b>1048</b>

Viewed graphically, participation in the Leadership Center movement is exhibited in Graph 1.

**Graph 1**



## **BEGINNING WITH THE END IN MIND (OR, ROI) –**

A question sometimes raised is what some have called “a return on our (NAB’s) investment” (ROI) in the Leadership Center initiative. This is not an unreasonable question when thought is given to both the financial as well as time investments that have been made at many levels. As a Conference, NAB has made a substantial commitment to bring leadership training to NAB churches based on the needs that were identified in the Schmidt Study (noted in the Introduction) as well as a continuing expression of need by a growing number of NAB pastors.

A basic assumption is made that the senior pastor, or even the entire staff leadership team, will not be able to complete the work that God has called the whole Body to do (1 Corinthians 12:4-26). This assumption then underscores

the critical nature of the equipping responsibility God has given to those in the local church (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

At the local church level, investment is made both in terms of financial commitments and staff time. In some churches, job descriptions have been rewritten to enable senior pastors and/or other staff members to invest time in congregants who exhibit an aptitude for ministry leadership positions. Additional resources are often drawn upon, including time to coordinate with other participating churches and pastors, time to participate in off-site workshops and experiences, sharing facility resources as part of a commitment to the larger Association movement, and financial support as a participating church.

In a pragmatic sense, further investment is made in the form of facilitated opportunities enabling emerging lay leaders to step into significant leadership roles. The Leadership Center curriculum, reading assignments and experiences alone has a somewhat limited scope. What is required is that the local church facilitate post-curriculum developmental opportunities for their emerging leaders. These developmental opportunities may take the form of shepherding (coach mentoring) those in whose heart the Spirit is significantly influencing in contextualized ministry experiences, both within current programming as well as outside of current programming.

Experience has shown that there may be a learning curve for some pastors as the curriculum component of each Phase begins to wind down and the next step in the developmental process is more directly ‘owned’ by the pastor or staff – typically a true ‘culture change’ for many pastors and churches. *The prospect of how to devise actionable steps to facilitate the emerging leader’s continuing journey in their development as leaders may represent a challenge that has heretofore not been seriously considered. However, if this step is not taken, development may become stunted and/or the developmental process considerably slowed.*

### **Measuring “Success” –**

So what can be expected from this investment? It may be problematic to define what is thought of as “success”, or even to find an appropriate methodology for measuring results. A natural inclination may be to apply a measurement tool as might be applied when evaluating the success of traditional church programming – how many, how much ... *quantifiable* results.

There may be a slight unsettledness however, when applying this type of measurement against the purposes of some forms of ministry, in particular, spiritual formation – a bit like attempting to measure one’s temperature with a 12 inch ruler. It is good to know one’s temperature, but is a ruler an appropriate method for measuring it?

Before attempting to measure the ‘success’ or ‘effectiveness’ of the leadership development initiative, there must be clarity on exactly *what it is that is being measured*. Examples below might be viewed as *secondary* (but quantifiable) measurements:

- Numeric growth in NAB churches participating in the leadership development movement
- Numeric growth in NAB church members participating in the leadership development movement
- Numeric growth in students electing to enter seminary, particularly NAB seminaries, in light of their experience with the leadership development movement
- Numeric growth in members accepting full time/part time ministry positions, particularly in NAB churches, in light of their experience with the leadership development movement
- Establishment of a mentoring culture in participating churches
- Senior pastors assuming personal ownership of leadership training, including regular mentoring of those in leadership development
- Leadership Centers that are self-sustaining in their ability to carry on and enlarging the local movement, able to train new pastors and conduct events and experiences independently

### **Making the Case –**

All of these goals are worthy, but are they the real purpose for which leadership development is undertaken? Can one say that if all of the above were achieved, the movement would be “successful”? Though these might be viewed as legitimate secondary goals, could we be measuring our *temperature* with a *ruler*? Perhaps a new lens is called for as we look at the ultimate outcome of leadership preparation.

Some have stated that the leadership development movement is all about *discipleship* and therefore is principally about *spiritual formation*. As believers are drawn into a closer, more intimate relationship with their Lord and God, spiritual formation certainly occurs. Though a worthy goal, spiritual formation may not be the ultimate goal. And besides, how is spiritual formation to be measured? Certainly not ‘by the numbers’.

Spiritual formation leads inexorably to a compelling desire to return to God the love that He has shown his disciple. A disciple’s love often takes the form of fulfillment of God’s call in Ephesians 2:10, “*For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advanced for us to do.*” Believers are often irresistibly drawn into service, frequently without fully understanding their compulsion to do so. However, can it be said that ‘good works’ are the end purpose? And how might works be measured for purposes of defining success of the Leadership Center movement?

In summary, though a case can be made that Christian leadership is a worthy goal, is it God's ultimate purpose? Though intentional discipleship and the resulting spiritual formation is a worthy goal, it too is likely not God's ultimate purpose. Though the responsibility for spiritual formation has clearly been given to the Church so that God's people might be prepared for works of service (Ephesians 4:12), might even the 'work of ministry' not be God's ultimate purpose?

It seems likely that all that has proceeded is merely a means to an as yet undefined end – BRINGING GLORY TO GOD! The ultimate purpose, then, for the leadership development movement within the North American Baptist Conference is to:

### **BRING GLORY TO GOD**

This will be achieved as the work of the ministry are carried out by mature and capable believers who will, at times, find themselves in positions of leadership as they serve the Body of Christ at home, in their church, in their community and around world. [Ephesians 4:11-16]

If it is agreed that bringing glory to God is our purpose in developing serving disciples by means of the Leadership Center initiative, then is this achievement ultimately 'measurable' in a quantifiable sense? Though God clearly expects ministry to be carried out in the service of the Kingdom, to at least some degree is not the very success or failure of those efforts left in God's hands? There appears to be two things (at least) in which God is most interested:

- 1) As a result of the believers' journey toward spiritual maturity, has the disciple become a *disciple-maker*; and,
- 2) Has the believer maximized the resources that God has placed at his/her disposal? [Matthew 25:14-27]

### **OPERATING ON THE BOUNDARY LINE BETWEEN THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE –**

Consider viewing the Leadership Development movement as a distinctly new and different approach to addressing the clear message from the aforementioned Schmidt study – one that indicated that many local pastors were seeking assistance in *raising and training leaders; building passionate disciples; and actual life change* among congregants. Believing the Leadership Development movement to be a distinctly new approach to achieving these ends, it is worthwhile to acknowledge that between the current and future state of leadership development in our churches a boundary line of some sort exists.

Operating under 'boundary line' conditions will always be challenging, as it represents change. This type of transition has been equated to rewiring an

electrical panel while the power remains on. It may be desirable, or at least less risky, if it were possible to ‘shut down ministry’ while changes were being made and then ‘restart ministry’ once changes are in place, but of course, this is not practical.

### Current State

“Biggest Issues and Challenges”

- Spiritual Formation
- Actual life change
- Raising up and training leaders
- Building passionate disciples
- Respond to staffing needs from within the local church



### Future State

- Passionate disciples
- Disciples who hear God’s call
- Servant leaders
- Local church as *disciple equippers*
- Pastor as *developer of ministry leaders*
- Local churches who reach out to other churches to lend support

## **The Boundary Line Condition**

Recognizing the existence of the ‘boundary line condition’ is the first step in crossing it. So it is worthwhile to briefly define this condition here.

Those who have entered into vocational ministry have been taught from the outset that it is the pastor’s role and responsibility to ‘take the lead’ in all areas of ministry. Support staff, and/or lay volunteers may be added and authority delegated, but the senior pastor is forever responsible for leading a church. (This may be viewed as the ‘Current State’ prior to crossing the boundary line.)

*The leader, whether minister, pastor, or elder, is therefore expected to be the best preacher, the best Bible teacher, the best counselor, the best prophet, and the best organizer in the church. Very often the minister places the same expectations on himself, because that is how he has been trained to think. (As a consequence) . . . Gifted people in the church are thus either ignored or shut out of opportunities to exercise their gifts until they become frustrated and discontented. Sometimes the more independent ones eventually go off and start out on their own . . . [T. Marshall, Understanding Leadership, 2003]*

After years of ministry, working with the present understanding of church leadership, a significant challenge is often faced both within the mind of the congregation as well as within the mind of the pastor, at the prospect of intentionally equipping, mentoring and then releasing lay leaders to step into significant places of meaningful ministry leadership – the ‘Future State’. Such a transition calls for two important changes:

- 1. Leadership development must be intentional, purposeful, facilitated, mentored, and have the end in mind; and,**
- 2. The pastor must personally transition through the critical step of releasing authority and leadership to the lay leader being developed.**

#### **In Addition to Leading, Developing Leaders –**

Bob Buford of the Leadership Network and founder of the Half Time organization makes a compelling observation. “*Organizations* (read: churches) *do not resist change – leaders do!*” Who are those leaders who resist change? They are members and staff of local congregations – typically, *the current leadership!*

A pastor must ask himself, “*Where are the opportunities, internal resources and barriers in my congregation that would either facilitate, or obstruct a transition from the current state of ‘pastor-as-(sole)-leader to intentional lay leadership development?’*” Before a transition of such magnitude can be made it is important to be clear that leadership development is a clear mandate from scripture.

In Timothy 3, Titus and Acts 6 the scriptures profile the pastor as one devoted to the spiritual formation of the church. There is no evidence to support the idea of the pastor as one skilled in any task-oriented area – those areas of service appear to be delegated to others, freeing the pastor to devote his time to <sup>4</sup>“ . . . prayer and to the preaching ministry.”

For those others called to ministry work other than that of a pastor, a reasonable assumption can be made that training and empowering proceed the call:

- Ephesians 2:10 – For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
- Ephesians 4:11-12 – It was he who gave some to be apostles . . . and some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God’s people for works of service . . .
- Ephesians 4:16 – From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching . . . so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

## THREADING THE NEEDLE

The greatest challenge facing NAB churches may be the change in paradigm from *pastor-as-(sole)-leader* to *pastor-as-developer-of-leaders*. This is likely to be a true change of culture in many churches.

Leadership development, as defined by the Leadership Center Training Model is, by its very nature, NOT a traditional program to be implemented and administered in a traditional sense. Nor is it designed to be a ‘special program’ managed by the senior pastor. A preferred view of the pastor may be one who is focused on *disciple-making* and *multiplying ministry leaders*.

A leadership development culture might have some of the following characteristics:

- Pastoral radar is always up, looking for what God is *already up to* in people’s lives, thus bringing focus to select individuals for leadership development
- Developmental opportunities are identified with intentionality and specifically fit to the developmental need of the individual (sometimes referred to as ‘particularizing’ the individual)
- The principal focus is on the emerging leader and his/her development, filling a ministry ‘hole’ is of secondary interest
- \*An awareness on the part of the pastor that God works first IN the believer and then THROUGH the believer – disciples worthy of God’s call lead first out of who they are, secondarily as a result of their skills and experiences
- Mentoring, particularly spiritual mentoring, becomes intentional and a mainstay of the local church (a ‘coaching’ mentoring style becomes increasingly important as ‘emerged leaders’ move into a period of skill development)
- Senior pastor, ministry staff, elders and other lay leaders begin to personally mentor emerging leaders (this may even be viewed as the senior pastor’s principal role)
- Task functions that have traditionally been fulfilled by the senior pastor begun to be delegated to spiritually mature laity, who are empowered to make decisions, freeing the pastor to focus on matters of spiritual formation

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\* An important point is made in the fourth bullet – leaders who finish well operate first and foremost out of *who they are*. Secondarily, servant leadership emerges out of a base of skills, experiences and giftedness. *A strong character facilitates a foundation of spiritual authority from which those who finish well draw their leadership strength*. A failure in character is typically where leaders are faced with the greatest challenges, and ultimately is the source from which those who do *not* finish well are often identified.

- Church infrastructure is open to receive emerging leaders into places of service principally for purposes of *development*, and secondarily to support and expand the church’s existing ministries
- †Emerging leaders are offered opportunities to expand their roll within the context of their church in positions of meaningful and significant leadership – this will represent a willingness on the part of the church and staff to coach, mentor and facilitate service in directions that had not previously been a part of the local ministry. God’s call on a believers life may not always fit neatly into existing programming
- Senior pastors seek Board approval to realign their job description to reflect increased focus to ‘...*Equip the saints for the works of the ministry...*’
- Administrative resources are assigned to support the leadership development initiative as a key area of responsibility
- A leadership development culture is characterized by a growing number of one-on-one mentoring relationships, which initially may be viewed as inherently inefficient (yet critical to the development of healthy leaders, this is the way that Jesus did ministry!) Efficiencies are gained as exponential growth occurs when leaders begin investing themselves in others, who invest themselves in others, and so on.

With the above principle at the fore, the Emerging Phase of the Leadership Center Training Model focuses almost entirely on *character formation*. It is in the second year that Emerging Leaders are invited to consider the Equipping Phase where a focus on skill development is addressed. In the third year, the Enriching Phase, leaders are equipped to develop others as they emerge into leadership, as God calls, and so the movement becomes self-sustaining.

The ‘threading the needle’ challenge comes into play as pastors maintain a line-of-sight between Mission and Purpose as ministry philosophy becomes directed toward more intentional leader preparation:

<b>MISSION</b>	<b>VISION</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
<i>Bring Glory to God by Completing the Work He has Called Each Disciple to Do</i>	Contribute to the Spiritual Formation of Believers	Equip Believers to: <i>Hear God’s Call; Instill Spiritual Disciplines; Acquire Skills in Servant Leadership</i>

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† The ninth bullet deserves additional attention. Experience suggests that emerging leaders who transition into the Equipping Phase have a more distinct sense of God’s call on their lives than perhaps others, though that call may be somewhat non-specific. Pastors and churches are encouraged to make space for these leaders to explore ministry opportunities as God leads. These may be non-traditional ministry areas, such as ministering to youth at a skateboard park, ministering to unwed mothers, or serving in other non-traditional areas either within or outside of the local church.

A church exhibiting a culture committed to leadership development will move beyond classroom and curriculum work by creating a ‘developmental’ environment that is . . .

**Intentional – Purposeful – Facilitated – Mentored – Has the End in Mind**

. . . as it brings glory to God by completing the work the local church, and each disciple within the local church, has been called to do.

A question that should always be asked at the far right Purpose-end of the spectrum is, “*Is there a clear relationship (a line-of-sight) between what is being accomplished at the individual believer level, and the ultimate purpose of bringing glory to God in all that is achieved?*”

**IN CONCLUSION –**

The Leadership Center movement offers every pastor in the North American Baptist Conference an opportunity to leave a *spiritual legacy* in their local church – a legacy of disciples equipped for works of service in positions of servant leadership, passionate about the work of the Kingdom.

In addition to the longer view of spiritual legacy, there is additional immediate value in supporting the pastor’s efforts to develop their leadership team as well as identify and equip new leaders to support and expand the ministry of the local church.

As believers intentionally pursue a more intimate relationship with God through the Emerging Phase, they become more sensitive to hearing God’s voice and gain greater clarity of the work God has prepared for them to do. Many will find their place of service in the context of their home church.

Ultimately the Mission of the Leadership Development movement is achieved: *Bring glory to God by equipping believers, in the context of the local church, to do the work God has uniquely and individually called them to do.*

The Vision is achieved: *By means of the Leadership Center Training Model, contribute to the spiritual formation and skill development of those disciples who are called to lead, to prepare them to be the kind of servant leader that Jesus modeled [John 13:5].*

And, the Purpose is achieved:

- *Equip believers to hear God’s individual and specific call for their lives*
- *Train believers in the principles of servant leadership that will enable them to complete the work God has uniquely called them to do*
- *Encourage local church pastors to add to their leading, developing others to lead*
- *Resource local leadership development movements, enabling them to reach out to other churches within their sphere of influence to expand the movement, to the glory of God.*

KN/