

# connections

Working Together to Grow the Kingdom

LEADERSHIP NETWORK®

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## Shifting Perspectives: Becoming Externally Focused

EMBRACING  
A NEW  
OUTLOOK

### FEATURED CHURCH:

First Baptist Church of  
Elk Grove

### LOCATION:

Elk Grove, California

**ESTABLISHED:** 1924

**SERVICES:** 5 weekly services

**AVERAGE ATTENDANCE:** 3,000

**F**ounded in 1924, First Baptist Church of Elk Grove's history is long and strong. And, as such a well established church, it had well established ways of doing things. But, when the church's leadership caught the vision to start focusing their efforts and activities on causes outside of the church, the idea caught on in a big way.

### SMALL STEPS FIRST

Director of Ministry and Mission at First Baptist, Keith Young, became involved with Leadership Network's Externally Focused Leadership Community. There, he saw how other leading churches around the country served their communities and focused their efforts on improving the world around them. Keith was instantly intrigued.

After this inspiring call, Keith brought home the information he had learned from the other churches and shared it with First Baptist's senior ministry team. They also were excited and inspired about this new way of being. They felt a clear and undeniable

calling that First Baptist should become more intentional in serving its community.

In the summer of 2004, the church leadership decided to see how the congregation would respond to an event focused on the community. They began with a backpack outreach where church members were asked to purchase the packs and fill them with school supplies for children whose families were in financial distress.

The local school district asked the church how many backpacks they might be able to provide. Keith said 100. But, by the end of the outreach, members had donated nearly 300 over-stuffed backpacks—approximately \$5,000 worth of school supplies.



First Baptist volunteers enjoy some fellowship while participating in the "Serve the City" extreme makeovers.

The church members responded to the outreach challenge even more enthusiastically than Keith anticipated. An externally focused congregation was beginning to take shape.

## GIANT STEPS NEXT

Keith and company geared up for the church's first large-scale project, Serve the City, last October. This venture was far bigger than the backpack outreach. In fact, Serve the City had the ambitious goal of providing "extreme makeovers" to the Senior Center of Elk Grove and the East Wind Youth Center of South Sacramento (an after-school program for Southeast Asian youth).

## 'PEOPLE ARE LEARNING THAT THEY CAN SERVE CHRIST IN WAYS OTHER THAN BEING AN USHER OR SINGING IN THE CHURCH CHOIR.'

Two church members—building contractors by trade—were challenged to oversee the makeover project. They helped organize nearly 400 volunteers who poured concrete, built walls, painted exterior and interior walls, reorganized storage areas, installed carpet, landscaped and laid sod. In addition, the church brought in computers, refrigerators and cabinets, and provided 6,000 books for the youth center's library. Additionally, church members donated cash and materials totaling \$30,000—not including the thousands of hours of volunteer labor.

### WHAT LEADERSHIP NETWORK MEANS TO ME

We would not be where we are today without the direct and indirect help Leadership Network has given us. Becoming a part of the Externally Focused Leadership Community has pushed us forward in our quest of becoming an externally focused church. In fact, our executive pastors will soon be unveiling their Vision 2010 plan, which is based around our growth as an externally focused congregation.



—Keith Young, Director of Ministry and Mission  
First Baptist Church of Elk Grove, Elk Grove, Calif.

## ART AND MORE

Keith Young's initial involvement with Leadership Network was based around art. He was invited to help facilitate some of the Externally Focused Leadership Community meetings. His



unique artwork was always a highlight of those meetings. And, through his artistic eye, Keith was able to visually represent the cool ideas that would emerge in each meeting.

But Keith wasn't just the Picasso of events. He also listened to what was going on and was inspired by the churches and leaders he met. He took many of the tools and ideas home to his own church, and helped them to also discover the joy of focusing externally.

Keith reports the church learned a lot from this externally focused effort. But, the most important lesson was this: follow-up with the organizations is just as important as the initial efforts. First Baptist's goal is to develop long-term relationships with the organizations they help.

And they are working to make that goal a reality. Several church members are currently volunteering and tutoring at the East Wind Youth Center. One church member even took 25 of the young men on their first-ever camping trip this year.

### LOOKING FORWARD

Keith and the other members of the leadership team at First Baptist are crafting a vision statement that addresses the church's new external focus. As the church members continue to embrace this new way of doing things, the leadership is excited about the future community service possibilities all around them.

To date, First Baptist has held three Serve the City projects and is preparing for another event in two short months. As Keith can attest, great things happen—and great blessings occur—when people hear and follow God's call to service. [LN](#)