

The young woman spoke convincingly from her heart. "When I walked through the door, I knew this was a different kind of church." She went on to describe her faith journey, one that eventually led her to a personal relationship with Christ and a new life as a growing disciple. ☒ The church of which she is a member is a 21st century church, one that takes seriously the building of authentic community. It is a church that recognizes people are at different stages of faith development which is why it has in place a process that facilitates growth and maturity at each stage. It is a church that offers multiple points of entry and service and focuses on people, not programs. ☒ It is a church where community is fostered through groups for the purpose of caring, learning, support, ministry and accountability. ☒ Finally, it is a church where the congregation believes it is on a holy adventure with God to discover where He is active and join Him in His work, both locally and globally. ☒ Would these characteristics describe your congregation?

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## Authentic Community: A Hallmark of 21st Century Churches

Twenty-first century churches share several common characteristics. They have effective leadership, and they seek to understand and proactively engage the culture. They equip and deploy the laity, and they collaborate with others to advance the Kingdom of God. These churches are also serious about building authentic community within the congregation. It is visible throughout the life of the church and reflected in the congregation's approach for helping people mature in their faith. It is not built through programs, but focuses on peoples' needs and opportunities.

"People can walk into the church and sense something different. They feel the presence of God. They experience the vitality and spiritual dynamic present. Even visitors recognize it," explains Carol Childress of Leadership Network.

A key element in building authentic community is providing an intentional process through which people grow in their spiritual maturity. This process takes on a very different shape and feel, based on the nature and context of each congregation.

At Chapel Hill Bible Church in North Carolina, three very different small groups exist for this purpose—the entry-level Bible study group, which includes time for fellowship and prayer; the lifestyle group, led by elders, which matches peer groups based on their lifestyles; and finally, the Timothy Series, their most intentional group (see page 4). The uniqueness of this process is that it helps people get to whatever level of growth is best for them. "We want to work with people who have not been challenged or stretched," explained pastor for leadership and ministry, Randy Russell.

Jeff Jones, pastor of leadership development at Fellowship Bible Church North (FBCN) in Plano, Texas, a Dallas suburb, defined the heart of FBCN as the "Minichurches," small groups of 12 to 80 members, designed to be church-in-miniature, and primarily led by married couples in homes. Meeting every other week, group members edify and encourage each other, creating a fully functioning community. Minichurches are divided into care groups, which often meet separately and provide fertile ground for cultivating future Minichurch leaders.

Not all 21st century churches subscribe to creating such an overtly intentional process for building community. Paul Kaak, pastor of global extension of New Song Church in West Covina, California, explained, "Our congregation, made up of primarily Gen Xers, doesn't like it when things appear canned. As church leaders, we do have something in mind, but we don't widely publish it. For us, the crux of authenticity is in Christ-centered cell groups of eight to twelve. We try to help our groups see the difference between settling for a cruise ship mentality versus functioning like a battleship. On a cruise ship we expect others to meet our needs while we sit back. On a battleship we are on a mission...and we do the mission together. Everyone has a place and a role, but we can't do it alone—we need each other." He continued, "We call them 'ExCell Groups' which provides a picture of movement, growth and expansion. We are moving toward a



cell church model because we are convinced that community is so important. For Xers especially, group life is more important than the big church event. People get connected and disciples are made in groups committed to witnessing, spiritual formation and leadership development."

At New Song, the larger worship service is primarily, but not solely, for believers. It is not a front door for non-believers. For non-believers, the front door is rela-

**We have been learning about the unfamiliar spiritual and mystical side of our faith, along with the more familiar rational side. We are experiencing a deeper intimacy with God.**

tionship first, and group life second. Relationships are fostered outside the church walls. Believers share life with non-believers, introduce them to others in their Christian community, and may then invite their seeking friends to join them in a Growth Group (sub-groups of the cell). Here, with 3 to 4 others (Christians and non-Christians), discussions center around living life and reading the Bible. It's kept very simple. Words like "accountability" are replaced with the concept of a "character conversation."

Well-trained leaders are crucial to the success of groups and community building. Some 21st century churches recruit and develop leaders from the bottom up, empowering leaders to multiply themselves. "We facilitate a very decentralized process for choosing and developing leaders by empowering and equipping each leader to mentor emerging ones," said Jones. "We bring these men and women into an Emerging Leaders group where we equip and encourage each new leader to rise to the next challenge. We try to customize the training experience to the needs of each leader." New Song raises up leaders through cell groups where people start off in apprentice leadership positions. Small group leaders, not the paid staff, prepare apprentices using a reproductive "just-in-time, on-the-job" training strategy.

For most 21st century churches, participation in community-building groups is

not dependent upon formal membership with the congregation. Often churches require membership for key leadership positions, such as deacons and elders. But as Russell pointed out, "We are looking for people who possess giftedness and spiritual maturity, regardless of membership. We feel that ultimately, membership will come. We just make them a member de facto, based on experience."

Measuring the effectiveness and success of the group can be fairly simple. At Chapel Hill, Russell explained, leaders get together quarterly to see if they are on target. In the lifestage groups there is minimal supervisory oversight, but leaders meet on a semester basis with Russell. At the conclusion of the Timothy Series, an evaluation tool is completed by all participants. New Song leaders take a more informal approach. They can tell when groups are working by whether the "one anothers" happen. "We are forever pointing to the Biblical term—edification," Kaak said. "Was everyone involved in building up one another in the group? Did we love, encourage, challenge, bless and pray for one another?" Success with both of these approaches is measured by some common denominators: people are coming, leaders are being equipped, groups are growing—hopefully with non-Christians and new Christians, as well as people connected with each other by faith.

Opportunities which enhance members' prayer lives help many 21st century churches nurture authentic community. Chapel Hill Bible developed a special service called "Be Still and Know," which provides a quiet, contemplative setting around the Lord's table, for intentional prayer sessions led by elders and deacons. Individual prayer stations, complete with tables, chairs and table lamps, are set up in the sanctuary, where reflective music is played. "It is intentionally opened and is a wonderful time of healing," said Russell.

For Gen Xers at New Song, there are classes on prayer and teams that pray. In addition, an enlightened awareness of the grace of God has led to increased emphasis on the spiritual disciplines. Kaak explained, "We have been learning about the unfamiliar spiritual and mystical side of our faith, along with the more familiar rational side. We are experiencing a deep-

er intimacy with God; individually, in groups and corporately. We have been in a transition this past year, moving from a church that focuses on skills for doing life, to being a church where we are discovering and enjoying being with God. Some new realities for us are 'abiding in Christ,' 'spending time in solitude' and the 'life of prayer.' As you can imagine, this has a huge impact on group life! Our Xers are learning to integrate the spiritual dimension into their groups and beyond."

Authentic community, of all the characteristics of 21st century churches, is perhaps the hardest to describe because it is a by-product, an outflow of the health and vitality of the congregation. It cannot stand alone but flows out of who the people and leaders are, the sense of mission and what they are trying to accomplish, and their walk with God. There is no quick formula for building authentic community. There is no "owner's manual."

For congregations truly intent on building authentic community, the final destination is clear; it is just important to design a travel plan, chart a unique route and identify the mode of transportation best suited for the church. ♦



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size of weekend worship: 1,200

# A Conversation

with  
LARRY CRABB, JR.

**NEXT:** How do you build authentic community within the church?

**Crabb:** First of all, you have to make it your agenda. There is nothing tougher than building true community. If you set your sights on anything less, you will settle for some type of superficial community. Building true community is not a five-step program. You cannot pursue the usual goals of church structure—a certain size group, a certain set of programs, new facilities—and expect connection to simply happen.

**NEXT:** So, with that understanding, what are the key issues in building authentic community?

**Crabb:** I believe there are two. The first is safety. Can people trust what is really happening in them to others? Do we deeply care for each other because we know Christ is for us? Churches are not typically safe places. We need to provide safety for every honest pursuit of God and be dangerously unsafe for all pretense and rebellion. An example...a woman told me that when she was 12 she came home from school and announced to her dad that she got a part in a school play. Her father's immediate response was, "How did you do on your math test?" He completely discounted her, did not hear her. These types of experiences made her feel unsafe because when she shared something that meant a lot to her, he did not care. She was making known something within her that reflected a legitimate hunger. It should have been affirmed. We need to make a real study of three kinds of relationships: (1) the kinds of relationships that diminish a person, (2) the kinds of relationships that heal and release the person God made us to be, and (3) the kinds of relationships that



don't do much of anything. Unfortunately, the latter is too common in our churches. Intentionality is such a key to the whole thing. It must be our agenda or else our relationships will be the third kind. When someone does have the courage to say something, we often fail to see what the Spirit wants to nourish and what He wants us to resist.

**NEXT:** What is the other issue?

**Crabb:** If safety is the first issue, intentionality is the second. Leadership needs to know how to lead. Do we realize how terrified people really are? People want to be deeply heard, not diminished. That includes facing what is truly ugly and bad in someone. We don't want to hear spiritual platitudes. Small group lead-

ers and pastoral staff need to build community that connects. Think hard about what kinds of relationships do damage, cause pain and increase the terror, and what kinds relieve the terror, release the work God is doing in them and honor the person God wants them to be.

Most of us don't pay close attention to how we impact others. Questions to consider are: 'Do I make the same (or similar) impact Christ would make?', 'If we want to build a healing community, what needs to be healed?' The biggest obstacle to building healthy community is a profound sense of inadequacy. We don't know what to do when someone shares something meaningful, so we back away and encourage only shallow communication.

**NEXT:** Once you recognize these two issues, how do you move to the next step?

**Crabb:** I have a simple model I call 'Enter, See and Touch'. If we are to build authenticity in groups, we must be able to enter each others' lives.

Next, we need to know what we are looking for, what we can see in another's soul. We need to be able to recognize two key elements in ourselves and others: (1) people are incredibly thirsty for some kind of relational contact that gives them a legitimate sense of belonging, and (2) people protect themselves in all sorts of

ways from being seen. We fear scorn, rejection, criticism. As a result, we lack the courage to open up and be healed. We long for the relationships that our defensive maneuverings sabotage.

Once you enter someone's story and have the courage to say, "I want to know you, I have time to hear your story" and, as we see more clearly both the hunger for love and the fear that it doesn't exist, then we must know what it means to touch someone, to dispense grace. We need to communicate what is deeply stirring in us that represents the reality of Christ, and simply give it. When I'm walking in fellowship with Christ, as my faith is burnished through suffering, as practicing spiritual disciplines enables me to hear the voice of God's Spirit, then something is alive within me, that when given, can make a difference. The key to community is to be real in the presence of grace, to own what's painful and ugly in the confidence that God has placed something better in all His children. ♦

## ConNEXT.ion

Dr. Larry Crabb, Jr.  
*A Distinguished Scholar in Residence at Colorado Christian University, Dr. Crabb is recognized nationally for his books and seminars designed to strengthen Christians in their personal walk and relationships. Dr. Crabb has authored 14 books and numerous articles. He is affiliated with Foothills Bible Church in Littleton, Colorado where he occasionally teaches and preaches.*

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**Recommended READINGS from Larry Crabb:**

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1988 (Revised 10th anniversary edition)

*Connecting*

Word

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1997

## TOOL A LEADERSHIP

**the timothy**  
SERIES  
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The Timothy Series is one way North Carolina's Chapel Hill Bible Church identifies potential leaders.

The series, designed for men and women seeking to grow in their faith, includes eight to twelve courses covering four tracks (Gospel, Early Discipleship, Serving and Leading). Some include pre-packaged courses (*Experiencing God*, *The Jesus I Never Knew*), as well as customized ones on mentoring and the essentials of theology. Through a series of classes, discussions, self-study, life experiences, and supervision by a mentor, participants are given many ways to grow their understanding of the Christian life.

The core courses are offered over a two-year period. Entry into the series is flexible and coursework may be completed at an individual's pace. Courses meet for six sessions, each one and a half hours long. Childcare is provided for children under age 11, as well as supervised learning opportunities for older children. Each course costs \$20 and that includes learning materials, childcare and other youth activities. ♦

### ConNEXT.ion

To learn more about the Timothy Series, contact:

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website www.biblechurch.org

## Rhythm & Pews Congregation Adopts Five Worship Styles

For members of Fellowship Alliance Chapel, believing that something wonderful can emerge from a difficult situation is not hard for them to accept.

Ten years after senior pastor Marty Berglund started the congregation out of his home, Fellowship Alliance had a thriving weekend worship attendance of over 800, which has now grown to 1,500. Berglund was pleased with how God was working through this suburban New Jersey congregation.

What Berglund did not count on was the sudden diagnosis in 1992 of Epstein-Barr, a viral infection, which caused him to take a nine-month leave of absence from the pulpit. "During that time different people filled the pulpit and we scrambled to put worship plans together," Berglund explained. "We always wanted to have worship teams, and had prayed for God's guidance in that area. My illness caused this very thing to happen!"

As word circulated among the congregation about the need for worship teams, talented people stepped up to participate. "We have a lot of gifted people here, and they wanted to be involved. As one team started, another would follow. Pretty soon we had five teams," said Berglund.

Based on the interests and gifts of the members, each team reflected a different style of music. A traditional choir led the congregation in singing, as well as providing musical accompaniment by the piano, keyboard and base. A second team brought a more contemporary feel to worship, with six singers and a contemporary band. Another team brought bold orchestral-style music, with a strong brass section, and engaged the congregation in a variety of music, from traditional hymns and choruses to more contemporary tunes. The fourth team featured folk-style music with three accompanying vocalists. Finally, a fifth team, also contemporary, led worship with both new and traditional hymns.

All of this flourishing talent and energy did not emerge easily, or without debate. Church members were concerned that so

many different styles — especially the contemporary ones — would cause them to be "unfamiliar" with their Sunday morning worship. "Some members wanted separate worship services, based on the 'flavors of music.' I did not like that because it divides up the Body," remarked Berglund. "My wife came up with the best analogy. Imagine, when a mother has prepared hamburger for dinner, members of the family express their desire for an alternate menu — spaghetti or salad. The father would explain that the meal was prepared for them and that tonight they are going to enjoy it together because they are a family. The next night they can have another menu, and share it together. One of the beautiful things that has emerged from this is that people who have been prone to be traditional have grown with the contemporary worship and vice versa."

Now, each quarter, four of the five worship teams are on duty, each committed to leading worship once a month. The fifth team has the quarter off. "Because each team has a whole month to plan for their Sunday, the quality of the worship is higher," said associate pastor Glenn Kantner.

What emerged out of a difficult time of need, has helped Fellowship Alliance strengthen their sense of community. "I truly believe that genuine, authentic community is driven by people's needs and opportunities. What happened here only confirms that belief, and we are more faithful disciples because of it," concluded Kantner. ♦

### ConNEXT.ion

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# The Young Leader Universe

## The Church to Come

The challenge for young church leaders today is to prepare themselves to lead a church that *does not yet exist*.

The following are the thoughts of Andrew Jones, a church planter who works among America's "Cultural Creatives" in San Francisco and most recently in Austin, Texas. Andrew can be reached at [cyberrev@hotmail.com](mailto:cyberrev@hotmail.com).

## Evolution of the Worship Service

Is it **just my imagination** or does the worship service change every time I look around? Here are some observations I've made about the way they have morphed from the churches of my childhood to what I see today.

**Courtroom** A black-robed orator delivers the sermon from an ornate pulpit elevated heavenward. Neck problems. Stained glass. Gothic pipe organ stimulates loud singing. The laity are inspired.

**Classroom** The pulpit degenerates into a simple note holding stand for a geekily-dressed teacher. Sunday school rooms appear. Song leading by the man with the waving arm prepares hearers of the lesson. The students take notes.

**Concert** The platform turned into a stage the size of a runway. Drum and guitar stands appear. Professional musicians entertain. A communicator commands attention with a well-crafted message. The spectators are impressed.

**Comedy Show** Cushy seats and scripted program. Moving stories from real people. The speaker uses Letterman voice. An emcee ties the production together. The audience checks the "had a good time" box.

What will the church of the future look like? Here are a few of my thoughts.

**Coffee Shop** Couches replace pews. Coffee cups sit next to Bibles on small tables. A single guitarist leads from his stool in the corner as others beat drums and join the vibes from around the room. After the poet

completes the open mike set, the storyteller ignites spiritual discussion over a common meal. The participants are interacting.

**Club** Multiple environments. There is more floor space than seating. Bands create an interactive mystical experience in the main room. Smaller spaces allow DJs to spin, book readings, creative artwork, wrestling with ancient mysteries and prayer. Late nights rule. The elect are dancing.

**Party** Music gives background texture for the fun atmosphere of a child's birthday party. Games unite the partygoers. A new follower of Jesus is plunged into the host's swimming pool. A journey circle leader shares the discovery of his spiritual community. A family's story of answered prayer creates spontaneous singing. The children of God are celebrating.

What a way to finish off the century, and it doesn't start with a "C".



Andrew Jones  
*My Phather's House*

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# 1998 Large Church Forums



**PLEASE NOTE**  
Forum attendance is by invitation only. Groups within each forum are limited to 25 people each and one participant per church. Participants are senior ministers and other ministerial management staff of large churches (1,000+ adults in weekend attendance) who have at least one year of ministry experience in their current position. All forums are held at Glen Eyrie Conference Center, Colorado Springs, Colorado. If you would like to receive an invitation or recommend someone to be invited to a forum, please contact Leadership Network at 800.765.5323 or fax 214.969.9392.

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- Dr. Richard R. Wynn, President  
Emerging Young Leaders**

## Daily Schedule 3 Day Forums

time	day 1	day 2	day 3
7:30		Breakfast	Breakfast
8:30		Discussion	Discussion
noon		Lunch	Lunch Conclusion & Adjournment
1:00		Free Time	
3:00	Forum Begins		
4:00	Set Agenda	Discussion	
6:00	Dinner	Dinner	
7:00	Discussion	Discussion	
9:00	Dessert	Dessert	

## Daily Schedule 4 Day Forums

time	day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4
7:30		Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
8:30		Discussion	Discussion	Discussion
noon		Lunch	Lunch	Lunch Conclusion & Adjournment
1:00		Free Time	Free Time	
3:00				
4:00		Discussion	Discussion	
6:00	Dinner/ Forum Begins	Dinner	Dinner	
7:00	Set Agenda/ Discussion	Discussion	Discussion	
9:00	Dessert	Dessert	Dessert	

## Church Interventionists Network Schedule

**August 26-28, 1998 Womens Ministry Consultants Forum** in Atlanta, Georgia. For those who consult with churches in the area of Womens Ministry. \$249.

**November 2-4, 1998 Denominational Leaders/General Consultants Forum** in Colorado Springs, Colorado. For those general church consultants who work with multiple churches. \$249

**November 2-4, 1998 Teaching Church Leaders Forum** in Colorado Springs, Colorado. For leaders in Teaching Churches that regularly mentor other churches through formal programs such as confer-

ences, workshops and strategic change relationships. \$249.

All forums are by invitation. To inquire about receiving an invitation call Linda Stanley at 800.765.5323.

### Workshops

**August 3-5, 1998 Leadership Network Forum Process Training for Leadership Development** at Lake Lanier Resort near Atlanta, Georgia. For those who desire to use Leadership Network's principles for building peer learning forums for leaders. \$495.

**January 10-12, 1999 The Gathering Of Church Champions: Networking and New Tools to Serve the Emerging Church** at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Dallas, Texas. A mix of plenary and workshop sessions. Registration opens August 3. Limited space available. Cost is \$175 before November 1. \$225 thereafter. Call 888.LEADNET to register.

**May 17-18, 1999 The Diffusion of Innovation** with Dr. Everett Rogers: A Workshop for Church Interventionists in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

**Call 888.LEADNET to register.**

# LEADERSHIP NETWORK Recommends

## The Church Consultant, The Collected Works of Lyle Schaller on CD-ROM

by Lyle Schaller, Cokesbury, 1998, \$124.95.  
To order, call 800.672.1789

This is a "must have" resource for 21st century church leaders. The collected wisdom of Schaller's 46 books, 300 editions of *The Parish Paper*, 7 video clips and 500 Friar Tuck cartoons are contained in this recently released CD-ROM. The material is searchable by topic and easily accessible using query templates.



## Life@Work Journal

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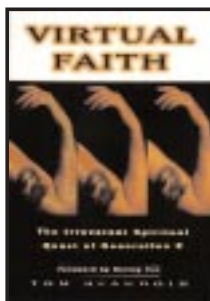
Written to address issues at the intersection of faith and work, this new publication has targeted business leaders who have a hunger for linking their faith and their work. Designed as an interactive publication, this journal fills a void in the market for leaders who want to combine biblical wisdom with business excellence.

## Virtual Faith, The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X

by Tom Beaudoin, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998, \$22. To order, call 800.956.7739 or check their web site, [www.jbpb.com](http://www.jbpb.com)

Much more than a thoughtful exposition of popular culture and a generation's search for meaning,

*Virtual Faith* examines four themes associated with Xers—institutions, personal experience, suffering and ambiguity—within the context of a theological framework that emerges from the irreverence of the generation.



## RNS Religion Week

Religion News Service, \$199/yr (52 issues).  
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## The Learning Congregation

by Thomas R. Hawkins, Westminster John Knox Press, 1997, \$14.00. To order, call 800.227.2872 or check their website, [www.wjk.org](http://www.wjk.org)

"Learning equips the church to remain the same while forever changing," writes Hawkins in this concise and useful handbook on the connections between the church, learning, systems and organizing for ministry in today's fast-paced world.



## Church Building and Remodeling Handbook

by Paul Spite, AFD Consulting, \$29.95. To order, call 219.269.5233 or e-mail [AFD@kconline.com](mailto:AFD@kconline.com)

No church building committee should be without a copy of this handbook. It is the single most comprehensive resource we have seen on church construction, renovation or expansion. It even has a chapter on "When Not To Build," and the sample forms and contracts make it an invaluable tool for church leaders.

## [www.media.mit.edu](http://www.media.mit.edu)

The website of the famed MIT Media Lab, this is a place to stay current with advances in technological thinking that are re-shaping our world. Be sure to check out the "Noteworthy" section.



## [www.astd.org](http://www.astd.org)

The American Society for Training and Development's site is an excellent place to check out trends and resources related to training, learning and people development. While some areas are restricted to ASTD members, you can explore the research area and read selections from their monthly magazine.

# 1999 LEADERSHIP Conferences

# 1999

SPONSOR	CONFERENCE/SPEAKER	DATE	LOCATION	FOR MORE INFO
Bill Easum 21st Century Strategies	National Conference	October 5-6	TBA	phone 512.749.5364 e-mail easum@easum.com website www.easum.com
George Barna Barna Research Group	Inward, Outward, Upward: Ministry That Transforms Lives	Over 40 seminars will be offered in cities throughout the United States. For a complete listing and schedule, please contact Barna Research Group		phone 805.658.8885 website www.barna.org
Changing Church Forum	Leadership at the Crossroads	May 10-15	Burnsville, MN	phone 800.874.2044 e-mail changing@changingchurch.org website www.changingchurch.org
Christian Stewardship Association	Fall Conference	September 30-October 3	Dallas, TX	phone 800.475.1976 ext. 25 414.483.1945 ext. 25 e-mail scott@stewardship.org website www.stewardship.org
Ginghamsburg United Methodist Church	1999 Change Conference	April 31-May 1	Tipp City, OH	phone 937.667.1069 website www.ginghamsburg.org
Saddleback Valley Community Church	How to Build a Purpose-Driven Church	May 10-14	Lake Forest, CA	phone 800.651.7331 website www.cssb.com
Virginia Mission Board	Leading on the Cutting Edge in the 21st Century	January 28-30	Richmond, VA	phone 804.672.2100 ext. 215 website www.vbrc21c.org
Vision New England	Congress '99, Proclaiming Hope: On Christ the Solid Rock We Stand	February 4-6	Boston, MA	phone 781.229.1990 ext. 311 e-mail info@vision4ne.org website www.vision4ne.org
Willow Creek Association	Student Conference/Promise Land Small Group Conference Church Leadership Conference Arts Conference Pre-Leadership Summit Workshop Leadership Summit	January 17-19/20-22 May 17-19 May 20-22 June 9-11 August 2-4 August 5-7	South Barrington, IL	phone 847.765.0070 website www.willowcreek.org

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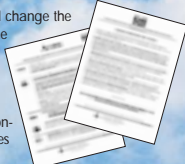
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