

“HOW TO BE A GOOD FARMER—EVEN IN A CITY: CREATING A COMMUNITY-BASED MINISTRY” APPEARED IN THE JANUARY – MARCH 2011 *ELDER’S DIGEST*. THIS ARTICLE PROPOSED “TEN FARMING COMMANDMENTS” WHICH SYSTEMATIZED JESUS’ MINISTRY METHOD INTO 10 INTENTIONAL ACTION STEPS FOR OUR TIME,<sup>1</sup> AND SERVED AS AN INTRODUCTION TO A SERIES OF *ELDER’S DIGEST* ARTICLES IN THE COMING MONTHS THAT WILL UNPACK THESE 10 COMMANDMENTS IN MORE DETAIL. THE FIRST FOLLOW-UP ARTICLE APPEARED IN THE OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2011 *ELDER’S DIGEST*.<sup>2</sup> BELOW IS THE SECOND IN THE SERIES. THIS ARTICLE WILL FOCUS ON THE SECOND AND THIRD “FARMING COMMANDMENTS”:

# “OUR COMMUNITY DOES NOT KNOW US . . .”

Once upon a time there was a little church<sup>3</sup> where church attendance nearly doubled in two years. Some new attendees were former members who returned; some were friends or co-workers of the members; others were interests from *It Is Written* satellite programs that the church hosted; and a couple was attending because they were restless in their own church because of biblical truth they had learned from members of this church. The pastor of this church said, “I believe the Spirit of God was leading people to the church because it had become a safe place to worship and learn about God.”

But they had a big problem, which they described like this: “Our community does not know us. They do not trust us. Our church has no credibility in our community.” As local church leaders and elders, can you identify with that?

A number of the members were excited about winning the lost and misguided in their community to Christ. But how could they connect with a community that did not trust them?

It was time for action to change their image in their community. It was time to really start farming—in a more intentional way.

The members in this church imple-

mented the first “Farming Commandment”<sup>4</sup> by studying Jesus’ ministry method and praying earnestly that the Holy Spirit would fill them and show them how to make His approach to ministry a reality in their church and community. They resolved they would use a systematic and intentional process to make this happen.

“Farming Commandments” two and three are important steps in this process:

2. Thou shalt assess the resources in thy church;

3. Thou shalt establish a **Social Action Leadership Team (SALT)**.

## **2. THOU SHALT ASSESS THE RESOURCES IN THY CHURCH.**

Christ needs *people* to do His ministry. The leaders in His local churches need to know what are the skills, strengths, and availability of their fellow church members before they begin to “farm” their community. Prior to beginning any ministry undertaking it’s obviously wise to assess what we have to offer those who we will serve. Knowing who we really are as a church will help us find our unique niche to serve our community, reflecting our church’s personality and God-given abilities. One thing is for

sure—the Divine part of our resources is without limit!<sup>5</sup> He will combine with what we have and multiply and bless it “above all that we ask or think.”<sup>6</sup>

Before proceeding any further in the process, the little church made an assessment of the abilities, interests, resources, and availability among their members. In the next page is a sample form to give you ideas for doing this in your church.

Also, it’s important to know what is in your church budget for implementing a community-based ministry. Mission is a priority and the budget must reflect your mission, which will become clearer as you proceed with your Gospel Farming process. Assessing human and financial resources compares to checking farming equipment/supplies/workers/budget at the beginning of each growing season.

## **3. THOU SHALT ESTABLISH A SOCIAL ACTION LEADERSHIP TEAM (SALT).**

The Social Action Leadership Team (SALT) is crucial to your church’s community farming. It’s like your farm management team. The team need not be a large group. Four to six members is enough. They are entrusted by the church board to be custodians of the process of

### CHURCH RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Experience/interests:

- |                                      |   |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handyman    | <input type="checkbox"/> Elder care               | <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child care  | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Sewing               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clerical    | <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical/skilled trade | <input type="checkbox"/> Quilting             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Driver      | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation           | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher/Tutor _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Counselor   | <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening                | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical professional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |   |   |

#### Time availability:

- |   |                                  |                                    |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday   | <input type="checkbox"/> morning | <input type="checkbox"/> afternoon | <input type="checkbox"/> evening |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monday   | <input type="checkbox"/> morning | <input type="checkbox"/> afternoon | <input type="checkbox"/> evening |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday  | <input type="checkbox"/> morning | <input type="checkbox"/> afternoon | <input type="checkbox"/> evening |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday  | <input type="checkbox"/> morning | <input type="checkbox"/> afternoon | <input type="checkbox"/> evening |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thursday   | <input type="checkbox"/> morning | <input type="checkbox"/> afternoon | <input type="checkbox"/> evening |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friday   | <input type="checkbox"/> morning | <input type="checkbox"/> afternoon | <input type="checkbox"/> evening |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saturday   | <input type="checkbox"/> morning | <input type="checkbox"/> afternoon | <input type="checkbox"/> evening |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am available occasionally, please call me when you have a need.            |                                  |                                    |                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am available if daycare is provided. Number of children: _____ Ages: _____ |                                  |                                    |                                  |

assessing the community and leading in the production of a church strategic plan for inreach and outreach.

The SALT group must like working together and be willing and able to interview leaders in the community to discover real needs to which your church can respond. However, they don't need to do all the interviewing. They can invite their fellow church members to interview community leaders they know who would be able to provide valuable information. (A future article will provide interview questions and other details of the community assessment/interview process.)

The SALT should meet at least once a month for prayer, Bible and Spirit of Prophecy study, fellowship (which may include food), and reporting and planning. Maybe they may want to have a retreat once a year.

Ideally, SALT members should be already participating in community organizations so that they can better inform the congregation about real needs and issues in the community and opportunities for volunteer service.<sup>7</sup> I represent my church at the local Rotary club.<sup>8</sup> I don't just go to their meetings, but support and participate in their community services

activities/projects as I am able.<sup>9</sup> Thus I have become friends with several leaders in the church's community and have been able to make connections with several organizations in the community on behalf of my church. This has opened the door to various service opportunities and projects for our church which we may not have had otherwise. In your church you may not have anyone yet who is directly involved in community organizations. However, members who are passionately willing to learn and get involved in the community would likely serve well as SALT members.

SALT is another example of the small group model in church life. This small group can be used mightily by God as a catalyst for transformation in and outside the church. "You are the SALT of the earth."<sup>10</sup> "The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented before me by One who cannot err."<sup>11</sup>

If your church is willing to position itself in the process we are beginning to describe, you may find yourself saying, "Our community *does* know us. They *do* trust us. Our church *has* credibility in our community!"

*The next article in this series will discuss the fourth and fifth "Farming Commandments."*

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<sup>1</sup> The 10 Farming Commandments are: (1) Thou shalt study Jesus' ministry method and pray for...; (2) Thou shalt assess the resources in thy church; (3) Thou shalt establish a **Social Action Leadership Team (SALT)**; (4) Thou shalt choose and narrow down thy territory; (5) Thou shalt do a demographic analysis on the chosen territory; (6) Thou shalt drive or walk around the chosen territory and note the homes, businesses, churches, people, etc.; (7) Thou shalt talk to community leaders and business people to discover community needs as they see them; (8) Thou shalt earn "Social Capital;" (9) Thou shalt develop a church strategic plan for church community involvement based on the felt community needs thou has discovered and the resources and dreams of thy church; (10) Thou shalt look for ways that God is already working in thy community. Celebrate, acknowledge, cooperate.... AND an 11<sup>th</sup> Commandment: Thou shalt not ignore commandments 1-10, and thou shalt remember to *Reap* where thou hast farmed and *keep* what thou doest reap (disciple –preserve the harvest)!

<sup>2</sup> The title of the article is "Once a Month Jesus Comes and Holds My Hand. . ."

<sup>3</sup> This church really exists.

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>5</sup>Philippians 4:13

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 3:20

<sup>7</sup> Monte Sahlin, *Understanding Your Community*, Version 2, (Lincoln, Nebraska: Center for Creative Ministry, 2004), 105.

<sup>8</sup> Rotary is an international service organization with 1.2 members worldwide. Its motto is "Service Above Self," and volunteers from its 34,000 clubs have had significant impact in meeting community needs all over the globe. For more info go to [www.Rotary.org](http://www.Rotary.org).

<sup>9</sup> We must not rest content with only attending community meetings. One pastor served on the Mayor's Advisory Council, and considered that the core of his church's community involvement. One woman who knew him from the Mayor's Advisory Council made this remark: "We always see him at meetings, but we don't see his church doing anything in the community." (Sahlin, p. 105). The role of the SALT group is to lead the church into investing in and implementing community projects, sponsoring actual services and programs for people in need.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 5:13

<sup>11</sup> Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1970), 115.