

connections

Working Together to Grow the Kingdom

LEADERSHIP NETWORK®

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Southern Hospitality

SERVING WITH LOVE

FEATURED CHURCH:

Healing Place Church

LOCATIONS: Louisiana,

California and Brazil

ESTABLISHED: 1993

SERVICES: 12 weekly

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE: 5,200

It's southern hospitality through and through at Healing Place Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Church members share a loving spirit and are energized to serve hurting people in, out and around the church.

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

The first place many people experience Healing Place's hospitality is at one of its "newcomer's receptions." Healing Place welcomes new churchgoers with heaping helpings of Cajun food and lots of fellowship. Attendees learn more about the church, get a tour of the buildings, and meet the ministers and staff.

Lead Pastor Dino Rizzo explains that in addition to making the newcomers feel welcome at Healing Place, the reception also helps the pastoral staff identify who's hurting or going through a rough time.

"It's when we figure out what they need and how we can help," Dino says.

PASTORS UNITE

New churchgoers aren't the only ones who feel the love. Dino says the church leadership also makes an effort to reach out to fellow pastors in the community.

They do this through regular encouragement and by spending time with other congregations in the area.

"It's easy to be friends with pastors in other cities when there's no thought to jealousy or church-transfer," Dino says. But it can be more challenging to make friends with local pastors, so "we're knocking out an old spirit of divisiveness. We're just going to love each other, because if the head is not acting right, the body won't act right."



(above) Healing Place Church reaches communities with its "Mobile Medical Clinic." (right) Worshipers unite as they praise together on Sunday mornings.



Pastors in the area have enthusiastically joined together in this new sense of brotherhood.

"The devil hates it when pastors come together and encourage each other," Dino says. "[These activities] keep us where we should be—focused on reaching the lost and making it hard to go to hell from Baton Rouge."

QUICK TO ACTION

When a church is dedicated to loving its neighbors, it has to be prepared to share that love, wherever it is needed. Healing Place has found that God has repeatedly prompted them to address the needs of their neighbors by venturing into new communities and planting new campuses.

"The biggest challenge of going multi-site was that everything happened so fast," Communications Pastor Dan Ohlerking says. "We saw a need in Donaldsonville—one of the lowest income zones in the country—and we filled it. The same is true for our Spanish-speaking campus."

'IT KEEPS US WHERE WE SHOULD BE—FOCUSED ON THE LOST AND MAKING IT HARD TO GO TO HELL FROM BATON ROUGE.'

God's prompt to action put Healing Place Church in a position where it had to "retro-fit" a system to what it was already doing rather than starting out with a solid demographic study and working off that.

Through interaction with other multi-site churches and Leadership Network, Healing Place was able to look at five or six multi-site models and use a portion of each one to come up with its own plan.

MULTIPLYING

When Healing Place says it is a "healing place for a hurting world," they take the "world" part of that statement very seriously. Healing Place Church has six campuses in the U.S. and several extended campuses in Brazil. Most of the campuses hear the same speaker either live or via video. Campuses that are pastored live "sync-up" to the messages during their services.

WHAT LEADERSHIP NETWORK MEANS TO ME



Leadership Network puts the right people together at the table to talk with each other and to get us to think about a smarter way to do things. It helped us think through things without ever giving the feeling of 'here is how to multi-site.' It provided the atmosphere to ask the right questions. Without the input we received from others we connected with, we would be delayed in getting the message out to people.

—Dino Rizzo, Lead Pastor, Healing Place Church

WIRED TO THE WORLD



Missionaries from Healing Place Church can stay connected.

Pastors Dino and Dan stay connected with their online blogs. There, they share their thoughts on everything from the movies they watch and the books they read to current

events and spiritual issues. These blogs are accessible through the church's main Web site and updated regularly. Dan just celebrated the one-year anniversary of his blog. It's a great way to connect with and advise people—even those away on missions—who can't physically get to the church, the pastors say.

The common link among all the campuses is the heart of the church.

"If it's not 'a healing place for a hurting world,' it's not Healing Place Church," Dan says.

Next year marks the launch of a Healing Place campus in Nkobe, Mozambique. A Brazilian couple from the church's Highland campus in Louisiana will pastor this campus. Fortunately, Portuguese is the native language of both Mozambique and Brazil, so the assimilation will be that much easier for the pastoral couple and the church.

Back at home, Healing Place Church is still hard at work. Following Hurricane Katrina, Healing Place became a shelter from the storm—both physically and spiritually. The church offered food, assistance and comfort to those affected, and acted as home base for many volunteers.

Healing Place has recently expanded its outreach efforts with its "Mobile Medical Clinic." The clinic travels to high-need communities in the area, offering free medical care to those who need it, either because they have been separated from their physician or because they can't afford care. It is staffed by a doctor straight from the congregation who had it on her heart to launch this ministry.

God's provision is increasingly evident as Healing Place is fulfilling His call to show love. When asked where the staff for this exciting new ministry came from, Dan says with confidence, "God brought them in." **LN**