

# 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 has been around for a long time. As a successful, well-established church, it had some well-established ways of doing things. But when the church leadership became inspired to try something new and start focusing their efforts and activities externally, the idea caught on. In a big way.

### SMALL STEPS FIRST

Keith Young, the director of ministry and mission at First Baptist, became involved with Leadership Network's Externally Focused Leadership Communities. There, he saw how some other leading churches around the country strived to serve their communities. They focused their efforts on improving the world around them.

This call to service intrigued and inspired Keith. He brought home some of 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

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 backpacks and fill them with school supplies for children whose families were experiencing financial difficulties.

The local school district asked the church how many backpacks they might be able to provide. Keith said 100. By the end of the outreach, members had donated nearly 300 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 had responded to the outreach challenge even more enthusiastically than was hoped. 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 much 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 who are building contractors by trade were challenged to oversee the project. They helped organize nearly 400 volunteers in pouring concrete, building walls, painting exterior and interior walls, reorganizing storage areas, installing carpet, landscaping, and laying sod. In addition, the church brought in computers, refrigerators and cabinets, and provided 6,000 books for the youth center's library. 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 to becoming an externally focused church. In fact, our executive pastors are soon 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

## ART AND MORE

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



Community meetings. His beautiful and unique artwork (above right) was always a highlight of the meetings. Through his artistic eye, Keith was able to represent what was going on in the meetings in a visually impactful way.

But Keith wasn't just the Picasso of the 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 discover the joy of focusing externally too.

Keith reports the church learned a lot from this externally focused effort. The most important lesson was that 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 membership continues to embrace this new way of doing things, the leadership is excited about the possibilities of how the church can serve its community.

First Baptist has already held two more Serve the City projects and is preparing for another event in a couple of months. Great things can happen—and great blessings can occur—when people hear and follow God's call to service. **LN**