



A Question of Growth

by Stephen Chapin Garner with Jerry Thornell

Cultivating a lively community of faith is not rocket science or brain surgery. I am well aware that people attend church for some very basic reasons. People go to church to hear a consistent word--sermons are as essential to the life of a church today as they have ever been. People go to church because they love the music--faith has been powerfully conveyed through song and stanza for generations. People go to church because their children are well taken care of--they receive assistance passing on the Christian tradition within their families. Dynamic sermons, music, and children's programming can certainly propel growth. With only one of these components in place, a community can experience increase. In truth, it would be hard to avoid growth if a community had all three working together.

But what propels exponential growth? What allows a church to grow out of a staid and stable program-based model of ministry into a transformative, life-altering community of believers? How does new and innovative ministry take hold within a community whose historical strength has been its resistance to change and its ability to endure against all odds? I did not know, but after only a couple of years into my pastorate at the United Church of Christ Norwell I began to witness a pattern of growth that was as surprising as it was unsettling. We seemed to be growing in spite of ourselves, and in the most unplanned of ways . . . and I suspect that deep down I was still hoping for an approach to church growth that involved following a list of well-defined steps toward success.

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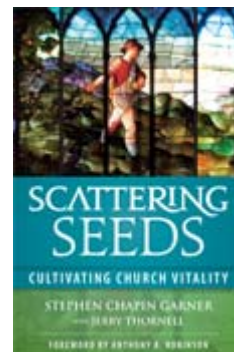
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NEW BOOK!

Scattering Seeds: Cultivating Church Vitality

by Stephen Chapin Garner with Jerry Thornell



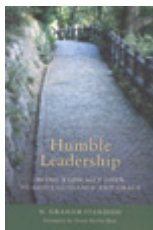
In *Scattering Seeds: Cultivating Church Vitality*, Stephen Chapin Garner and Jerry Thornell share the story of their home congregation, the United Church of Christ in Norwell, MA. This average congregation has approached congregational life in a not-so-average way. Each congregant is seen as a minister, bringing the good news of Christ to the community; the church has moved away from boards and committees, instead utilizing the people to form ministry teams; and they have revitalized the way they approach and practice worship and education. Garner and Thornell don't claim to have the secret to church growth and vitality, but in sharing the story of their simple church in New England, they give hope and innovative ideas to congregations in regions all over the country.

This week - 30% off *Scattering Seeds*

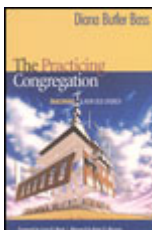
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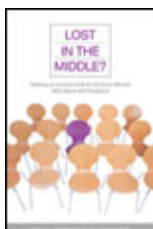
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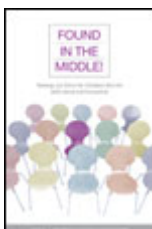
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