

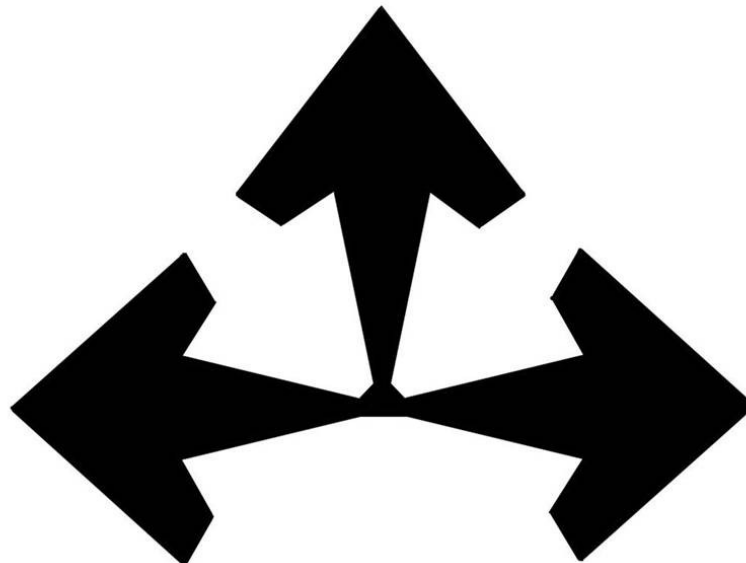
## The Spiritual Journey of a Church

There are three principal aspects to the spiritual journey of a Christian or of a church. The first is the journey inward. In the life of a Christian, this is the time before a person accepts Jesus Christ. It is the time when the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and of our need for a Savior. This is the time when we are drawn to Christ; it is the time when we discover who we really are. In the life of a church this is the time when the family draws together to focus on God in worship. It is also the time when the family comes together in fellowship. It is the time when the members of a church family define who they really are.

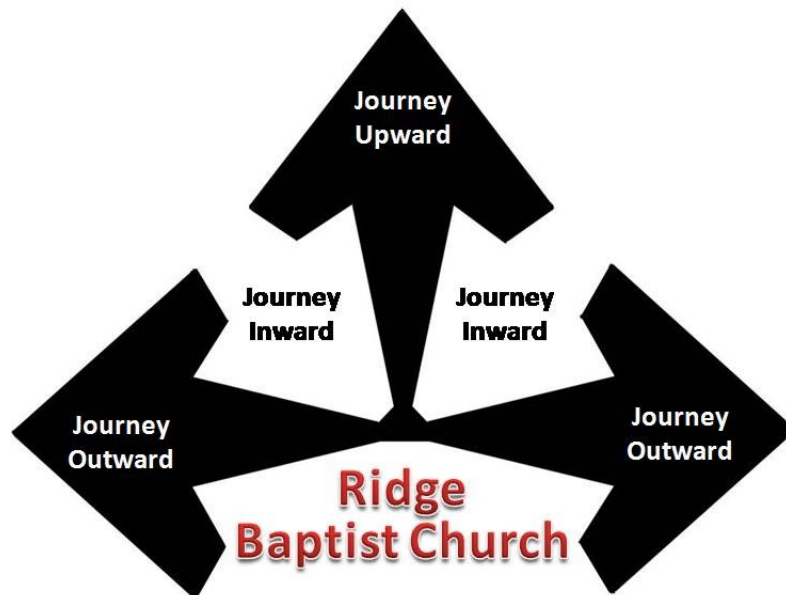
The second aspect of the spiritual journey is the journey upward. This is the process of spiritual growth both in the life of a believer and in the life of a church. It is the time when we grow as disciples...as followers of Jesus Christ. This phase involves an increase in the depth of our relationship with God, our understanding and application of His Word and our grasp of Christian doctrine.

The spiritual life of an individual is never complete until personal belief and spiritual growth finds their way into concrete expression as Christian commitment. This is the journey outward; it is the journey that leads the Christian to embark on mission and ministry. The same thing is true in the life of a church. The discipleship development of believers finds its expression in mission and ministry.

If we were to draw a picture of this spiritual journey, it would possibly look something like this...



You will notice that if you look at this figure there are actually white arrows pointing inward, a black arrow pointing upward and two black arrows pointing outward. This figure cannot exist without all of these components. Likewise, the spiritual life, of an individual or a church, is not complete without all three components, looking something like this...



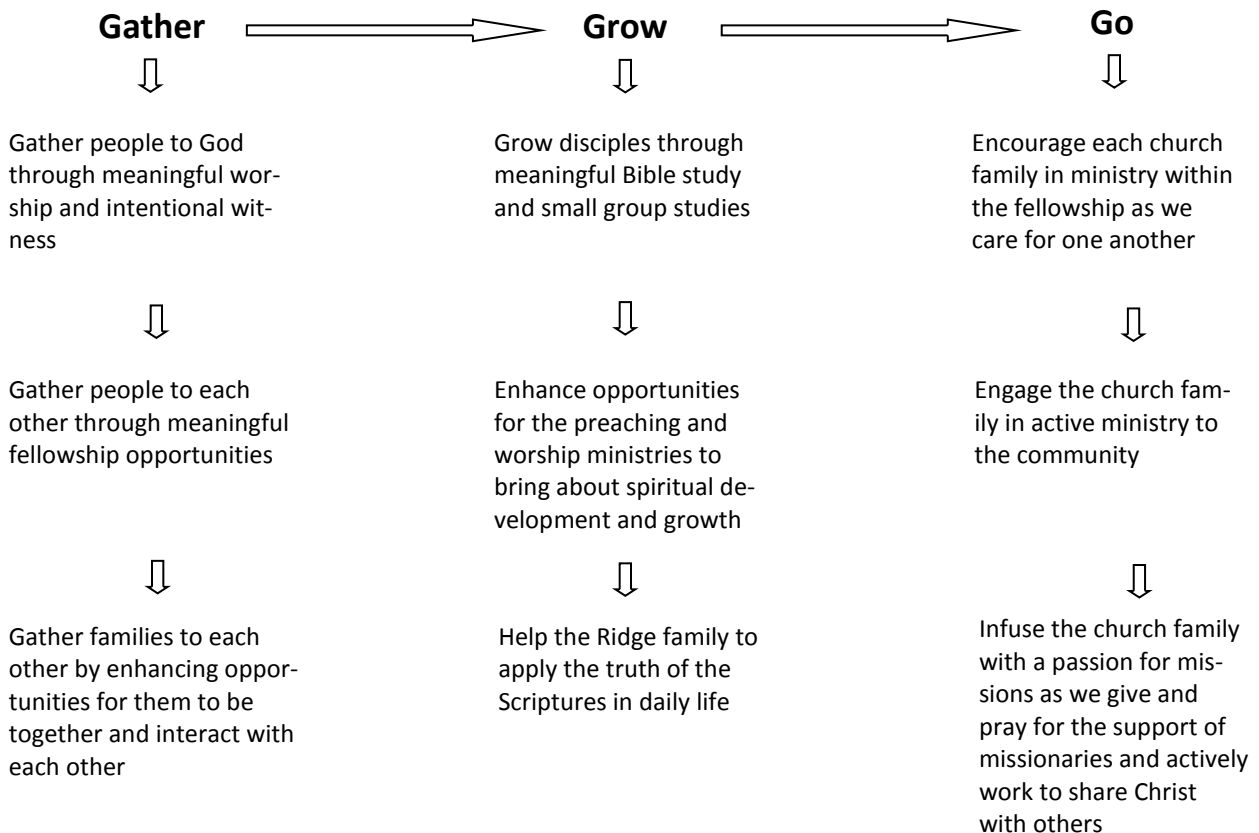
In order to accomplish this pattern of total spiritual development in the life of a church family, the ministry of the church must be designed with this specific purpose in mind, inviting people to take the journey inward to God and to fellowship with other believers, the journey upward in spiritual development and the journey outward in ministry and mission. The following proposals use this spiritual development pattern as the model for implementation. The goal of the ministry plan is to establish a ministry concept that is easy to grasp, intentional in focus and offers the opportunity for each person who makes up the church family to mature spiritually as an individual in the same intentional manner as the church does collectively.

## Designing Ministry on Purpose

Most, if not all of us would be unlikely to desire that the church fail in the matter of effectiveness. In other words, we want our church to be effective in what it does. Why, then, are so many churches ineffective today? One of the first things that hampers effectiveness is the fact that few people have really taken the time to consider what an effective church looks like. When we look at effective church life, we have to start by choosing desired outcomes. In other words, what would things look like if we were effective as a church? Here are some things that characterize life in an effective church...

1. People come to know Jesus Christ as Savior
2. Believers grow as disciples of Jesus Christ
3. The church functions like a family—mutually supporting and caring for one another
4. Families in the church are encouraged and strengthened
5. The church ministers to those in need
6. The church shares the gospel eagerly with those in her own community and around the world
7. Meaningful and effective worship is a priority

**We can accomplish these outcomes in our church by focusing on three priority commitments:**



## Foundation of the “Gather, Grow, Go” Process

“Gather, Grow, Go” is a biblical model for the way God has always intended his relationship with his people to be carried out. In the **Old Testament**, in the book of Exodus, God called the Hebrew people out of bondage in Egypt and **gathered** them to himself at Mount Sinai. There he revealed himself to them, gave them a basis by which they could relate to him (the covenant relationship) and gave them an identity as the people of God. Because the people did not fully commit to the identity to which they were called, God allowed them to wander in the wilderness for forty years. This was a time when God was **growing** up a generation ready to do what he had called them to do...to take possession of the land he had promised to give them. It was a time when God revealed himself to the people as they came to know him more deeply. Finally, when the growth process had reached a sufficient point, God called his people to **go** into the Promised Land to take possession of it...to accomplish the beginning of his purpose for them. He **gathered** the people at Sinai, taught them and helped them **grow** in the wilderness and then called them to **go** into the land of Canaan.

In dealing with individual disciples, the **gospels** give us a picture of the same process in the life and ministry of Jesus. In Mark 3:13-15 the Scriptures say this:

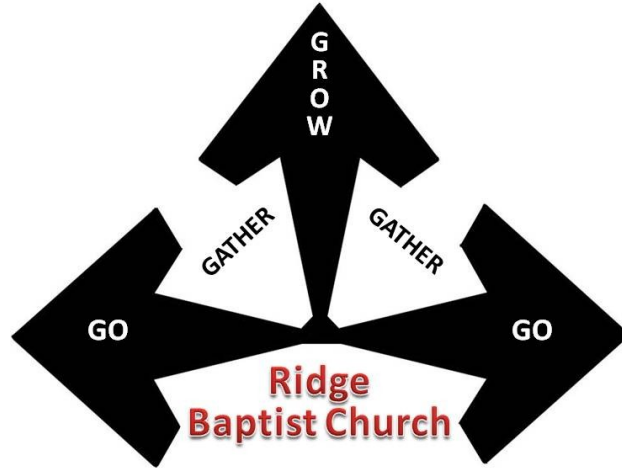
“Jesus went up into the hills and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.”

Jesus called and **gathered** people to himself and appointed them to “be with him.” This means that they were to stay with him and learn from him...to **grow** in him. Then the passage says that he intended to send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons...to **go** and do the work of the kingdom. He **gathered** his disciples, caused them to **grow** in him and then he sent them out that they might **go** and do the work of the ministry.

We see a similar picture in the life of the New Testament church. In the second chapter of Acts we can take verses from the beginning and end of the story of Pentecost to get a picture of what the early church was like. The emphases in the parentheses are to show the application of this principle in the life of the church.

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place (**gathered**). Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit (a necessary part of **growth**) and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them (this proclamation spilled out into the streets...the Spirit caused them to **go** out and witness)...They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching (**growth**) and to the fellowship (**gathering**), to the breaking of bread (**gathering** for worship) and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and any wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles (they were **going** and doing the work of the kingdom)...*And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*”

This is a picture of how the “Gather, Grow, Go” ministry emphasis would look on the spiritual journey illustration...



Each component of the spiritual journey has a corresponding component in the ministry emphasis of the church. We can further see how these emphases are directly related to the church family. In other words, we gather, not only to God in worship, but to each other in fellowship. We seek to grow, not merely numerically but we also seek to grow in Christ. We go beyond the walls of the church in ministry to the community to be sure, but we also are on mission to the world. The clarification of these goals in the life of the church would look like this...



The remaining task for Ridge Baptist Church would be to create a ministry structure that would allow the church to organize in such a way as to make these ministry emphases our primary focus. In other words, it would mean creating a structure to support our ministry priorities rather than devoting our ministry to the support of our structure. This can be accomplished by taking the decision-making process that now involves many committees and sub-committees and giving it primarily to three councils, one for Worship and Fellowship (gather), one for Discipleship (grow) and one for Missions and Ministry (go). The focus of the Leadership Development Team (currently the Nominating Committee) would be to identify and encourage people to both lead on these councils and to volunteer to work as part of teams and work groups in the life of the church. Various members of the councils would have the opportunity to work with teams and work groups comprised of volunteers who commit to areas according to their passion and the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Volunteers on all teams and work groups, with the exception of the Deacons, the Stewardship Development Team, the Personnel Support Team and the Promise Care Committee would be able to serve as long as the Lord leads them to do so. Members would have an opportunity annually to volunteer for any groups where they would like to be involved.

The Council structure would replace the current committee and sub-committee structure in the life of our church. The Ridge Ministries Council would replace the Chairman’s Council. The Ministry Structure would look like this:

- Worship-Fellowship Council**
- Adult Choir representative
  - Children’s Choir Leader
  - Preschool Choir Leader
  - Audio Team Leader
  - Child Care Team Coordinator
  - Decoration Work Group Leader
  - Ushers Team Leader
  - Praise Team Representative
  - Member-at-Large
  - Senior Adult Ministry Representative
  - Recreation Team Leader

- Discipleship Council**
- Bible Study Coordinator
  - Children’s Ministry Team Leader
  - Older Student Representative
  - Preschool Bible Study Team Leader
  - Member-at-Large
  - Adult Bible Study Representative
  - Vacation Bible School Coordinator
  - Media Center Coordinator

**Congregation**

- Missions and Ministry Council**
- WMU Coordinator
  - G.A. Leader
  - Youth on Mission Leader
  - R.A. Leader
  - Member-at-Large
  - Deacon Vice-Chair
  - Shared Facilities Team Leader
  - Promise Care Committee Representative
  - Care and Comfort Work Group Leader

- Cooperative Ministries Council**
- Deacon Chair
  - Stewardship Development Team Leader
  - Facilities Ministry Team Leader
  - Personnel Support Team Leader
  - Leadership Development Team Leader
  - Worship-Fellowship Council Leader
  - Discipleship Council Leader
  - Missions Council Leader
  - Senior Pastor
  - Pastor for Worship and Senior Adults
  - Minister for Education and Students

The only church-elected committees or teams which would still exist under the new ministry structure are:

- The Tellers Committee (reduced from five teams to three)
- The Leadership Development Team
- The Personnel Support Team
- The Promise Care Committee

Here is how the council structure fits with the spiritual journey illustration...



The final piece of the organizational puzzle would be structuring our church calendar to conform to the new ministry model. The church calendar would also be planned with the desired outcomes, mentioned earlier, in mind. In order to do that, this proposal would change the church calendar and the ministry schedule in the following ways.

#### Phase One

All councils would meet during the first month of each quarter, the same month as the quarterly business meeting.

Deacons and the Stewardship Development Team would meet during the second and third months of each quarter for a total of eight meetings per year instead of the current twelve.

The Promise Care Committee would continue to meet on a monthly basis, on the third Monday of each month.

In a month with five Wednesdays, the fifth Wednesday would be designated as a work group and team meeting day with all other activities canceled. Child Care and a general children's activity would be planned to allow for maximum participation.

A MINIMUM of half the days of each month would be kept clear of scheduled meetings, regular programs and worship services to allow opportunities for families to be together and for teams and work groups to do ministry. (A worthy ultimate goal would be to have NOTHING scheduled on the church calendar except ministry opportunities and open nights on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.)

A commitment to maximize the effectiveness of council ministries while honing the focus of our overall ministry would require that each council (Worship/Fellowship, Discipleship and Missions) promote only ONE special program event per year.

The work of teams and work groups would be accomplished by volunteers. Only the leaders of those groups will be recommended by the Leadership Development Team and elected by the church annually. Should there be an insufficient number of volunteers to carry out the work of a team or work group, the work would be suspended until such time as sufficient volunteers are committed to the task.

(A calendar which reflects this schedule is attached)

Phase Two:

Worship time would be changed to 9:30 a.m. each Sunday with a fellowship time to follow after the Worship Service. Bible Study groups would have the opportunity to meet at 11:00 a.m. or they could choose to meet at another time Sunday or even during the first part of the week. At least one Bible Study group would be provided on Wednesday evenings to insure that all members have the opportunity to participate.

# 2008

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- Councils
- Business Mtg.
- Team Mtg.
- Worship/Bible St.
- Stewardship
- Deacons
- Promise Care

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